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Seventy-second session

8th plenary meeting
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New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana (Madagascar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 12.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ouattara (*spoke in French*): I would first like to express my condolences to the Mexican Government and people after the earthquake.

I wish to express the gratitude of the Ivorian people for the great mobilization of countries gathered here that elected Côte d'Ivoire to the Security Council for the term 2018-2019. That election demonstrates, if that were necessary, the Assembly's support for my country's ongoing commitment to peace and dialogue.

It is also a call to share with the the Assembly and the world our experience in managing the emergence from a crisis and in effective cooperation with the United Nations, as evidenced by the success of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire. That peacekeeping operation, with its lessons learned, has been acknowledged by all as one of the few peacekeeping successes of our global Organization in the past few decades. It should serve as inspiration to the United Nations in its peace initiatives. That is why Côte d'Ivoire, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council — which status was just conferred by the Assembly — intends to promote fair and pragmatic compromises in the settlement of crises on the Council's agenda.

In a world experiencing severe geopolitical turbulence and climate change, the theme of our session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", is a call to action to strengthen peace in the world. We must conceive of a development model that is better balanced among the countries and more just among people. This theme us an urgent challenge to save our planet so that we can build the virtuous world we want for ourselves and for future generations.

From the discussions we held with all countries as we sought to promote our candidacy for the Security Council, we noted that there is an urgent need to respond to new global threats in order to achieve a lasting peace for all. More than ever before, it is time to act and to fulfil our commitments, so as to meet the expectations of our peoples with regard to security and development.

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Since 2001, the global counter-terrorism architecture that our Organization set up has become considerably stronger in terms of law and the coordination of international action. Despite those encouraging developments, and the success of anti-terrorist operations by major Powers and their allies in the Middle East and, to a lesser extent, in Africa, the world is struggling to find a satisfactory collective response to terrorism. Under such conditions, those important successes will be in vain and the terrorist threat will remain a source of concern if Africa continues to be the weak link in the global fight against terrorism.

The major Powers must intensify their commitment to combating terrorism in Africa and must provide greater support to the efforts of the continent and the United Nations. We call for support for the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), whose work is essential for the security of a large part of the African continent. For its part, Côte d'Ivoire will make support for the G5 Sahel and fighting terrorism in Africa one of the priorities during its term on the Security Council, since without stability there can be no development.

Global warming is a real concern. No country is immune to the devastating effects of climate phenomena, which are jeopardizing our countries' peoples and economies. We must therefore act quickly and responsibly if we are to preserve our environment and our planet.

With regard to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, my Government will live up to its signing of it and will seek, inter alia, energy transitions, the development of smart agriculture and the preservation and protection of the environment. It is urgent that every country, like Côte d'Ivoire, uphold its commitments voluntarily agreed to under the Paris Climate Agreement. In the same vein, developed countries must honour their commitments to finance the adaptation of the economies of the countries in the South to the impact of global warming. We must also be sensitive to the plight of many small island States. We must consider climate change a real threat to international peace and security. We must urgently take the right steps, including by adopting an international pact for the environment, which has been proposed by France.

Maintaining peace and security in the world also requires strict management of the issue of nuclear weapons. We must do our utmost within the Security Council to find a peaceful solution to the serious nuclear tensions in the Korean peninsula. Any use of nuclear weapons in that region would demonstrate the moral bankruptcy of our civilization and the end of the era we are living in. It would run the risk of a nuclear conflict with unforeseeable consequences. I therefore call on the major Powers to show restraint and to enter into dialogue with North Korea, in order to create the conditions for a lasting de-escalation and to reassure the world with regard to maintaining peace and stability in that region.

All efforts to combat illegal immigration and human trafficking and smuggling have not put an end to those phenomena, which continue to engulf thousands of young people from African countries in the Mediterranean. On the contrary, they have contributed to the weakening of democracy and a rise of extremist feelings, even in established Western democracies.

To put an end to those dangerous migrations, developed countries, in particular countries and regions that receive migrants, must mobilize investments and resources needed to finance development in migrants' countries of origin and transit so that their economies are able to offer jobs and opportunities to their youth. The fight against people smugglers in countries of origin should also be intensified. Furthermore, the international community must put an end to the war in Libya and dismantle terrorist groups and smugglers' networks that continue to traffic in human beings.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the response to this scourge is focused on prevention by increasing awareness and assistance with return for those who attempt migration, as well as dismantling smuggling networks. The fight against illegal migration must respect existing international legal obligations that guarantee respect for the human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all migrants.

Building a peaceful and secure world remains our priority. Despite a difficult economic situation marked by a sudden drop in the price of cocoa, Côte d'Ivoire intends to honour its commitments in the framework of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the context of its priority development goals, Côte d'Ivoire has reached an average annual growth rate of 9 per cent per year over the past five years, thanks to sound macroeconomic policy, the work of Ivoirians, an improved business environment and significant investment.

We are now working to effectively distribute the fruit of that growth, particularly to the most destitute and the most vulnerable segments, all while seeking to transform the country. That is the essence of the 2016-2020 national development programme and of the bold social reforms led by my Government. I would like to make an urgent appeal to all States and civil society organizations so that the international mobilization for the implementation of the SDGs does not fade. Developed nations must honour their commitments by contributing to financing for development in accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development.

We must face the fact that the individual and, above all, collective responses of our countries to the main security challenges of our time are insufficient, even if we have achieved significant results in the fight against terrorism in certain theatres. The fact of the matter is that our world is vulnerable and no State can face the global threat alone. The rise of terrorism, the devastating effects of global warming and the persistence of nuclear tension, particularly in the Korean peninsula, have sorely tested our collective security architecture. We must therefore agree on the ways to strengthen and modernize it so as to enable our countries to respond jointly and effectively to the serious threats of our times.

We must also afford pride of place to conflict prevention in order to spare our people the exorbitant human and material cost of war. In that connection, I welcome the implementation of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which will allow both institutions to work together closely during all stages of the cycle of conflict in a predictable, systematic and strategic manner.

Our Organization is at an important turning point in its history. It is facing significant challenges in the carrying out of its mission. It is therefore timely for my country to pledge its full support for the reforms called for by Secretary-General António Guterres, and to renew our faith in him. His reforms are steps in the right direction. They ought to be pursued in that same spirit, with the support of all countries. Côte d'Ivoire is ready to write a new page in its history at the United Nations after its election to the Security Council, thanks to the support of all. We must continue to work together in the interest of our Organization in order to advance the priority causes of our peoples.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine.

Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Poroshenko: On behalf of Ukraine, I sincerely congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. Ukraine fully supports all six priorities for the upcoming session defined by him and is ready to assist him in his noble efforts.

A lot must be done to translate our common vision of a peaceful, prosperous and equal world into reality. The spiral of violence continues to affect more and more countries and regions. Transnational terrorism, the use of force in international relations, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the refugee crisis, poverty, human rights violations and environmental fragility are only some of the challenges we face. The scope of the threats demands our joint and resolute response. It is time to act, and we have a very narrow window of opportunity to avoid an irreversible decline.

The United Nations should be at the forefront of this process. Ukraine has always advocated for the need to reform the Organization to meet the most urgent global challenges in a timely and adequate manner. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General, since the first day of his mandate, to develop and implement a robust and comprehensive United Nations reform agenda. We support no less the United States initiative to promote an effective and meaningful

reform of the United Nations. Comprehensive reform of the Security Council is long overdue, and we hope that this session will herald new momentum in the intergovernmental negotiations on the blueprint for the Security Council reform.

Let me take this opportunity to state clearly that we in Ukraine could not agree more with the call for the sovereignty of nations to be universally respected and guaranteed. That very conclusion was timely and rightly raised yesterday from this rostrum. When the United Nations was set up, it was designed to maintain peace and security in the world, based on the principle of respect for the sovereignty of States and the integrity of their borders. The founding nations, including Ukraine, aimed to secure a world where the sovereign rights of free choice would be respected. The five permanent members of the Security Council (P-5) were to safeguard that principle in the name of sustainable peace and security. That was the principle that one of the P-5 member States so blatantly violated against my own country. This principle needs to be put back on track using whatever means and tools we have at hand. Ukraine is the right place to invest in that noble endeavour, in the name of sustainable peace and security.

That is what millions of Ukrainians have struggled for since the beginning of the Russian aggression in 2014 in both Donbas and Crimea. A three-year-long war with Russia has resulted in 10,000 people killed and 7 per cent of Ukrainian territory occupied, and 20 per cent of the Ukrainian economy and industrial output has been seized, destroyed or simply stolen.

However, the most horrific thing in this situation is that the Kremlin has consciously chosen the tactics of increasing human suffering. According to human rights activists, the occupied Crimean peninsula has turned into a territory of repression. Anyone disagreeing with the Kremlin risks their freedom, and even their life. Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars get arrested even for posting in social networks or — as was case of the Crimean farmer Volodymyr Balukh, in December 2016 — just for putting a Ukrainian national flag on his private residence.

Persecution of the leaders of the Mejlis — the representative organ of Crimean Tatars, whose activities the Russian occupiers banned — continues. Only a week ago, Ahtem Chiygoz, Deputy Head of the Mejlis, was sentenced to eight years in prison for standing up against the Russian occupation. Another Deputy Head of the Mejlis, Ilmi Umerov, who has a serious health problem, remains under house arrest, not even allowed to leave Crimea for medical treatment.

Russia blatantly violates resolution 71/205, entitled "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)". It keeps ignoring all requests of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure proper and full access of the international human rights monitoring mission to Crimea. The Kremlin pays no respect to the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice imposed on it. The Court urged Russia to refrain from maintaining or imposing limitations on the ability of the Crimean Tatar community to conserve its representative institutions, including the Mejlis, and to ensure the right for Ukrainian citizens to study in the Ukrainian language.

The international community must give a proper response to such Russian disregard of its international obligations. It must keep a close eye on Crimea to prevent a new genocide inspired by the modern proponents of Stalin's totalitarian ideology against the Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians. I rely on the support of delegations here for Ukraine's initiatives to ensure the observance of human rights in the temporarily occupied Crimea, in particular in a further General Assembly resolution.

We need to strengthen the international regime of de-occupation of Crimea. The fact that at the highest international level — the General Assembly — Russia was recognized as an occupying Power proves that we are on the absolutely right track. The time has come to establish a new international group of friends of Ukrainian Crimea to coordinate and promote our common steps. We count on the coordinated and targeted support of our international partners.

The militarization of Crimea is another security threat that affects the whole of Southern and Eastern Europe, as well as North Africa and the Middle East. Ukraine strongly condemns the numerous military exercises conducted in occupied Crimea, as well as those close to the borders of Ukraine, in particular that known as West-2017. Together with our neighbours and partners, we urge Russia to ensure full compliance with its commitments under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Vienna Document and other international rules concerning military activity.

The security and human rights situations in Donbas remain no less dramatic than in Crimea. This year, Ukraine initiated three major ceasefire attempts — the Easter, Harvest and Back-to-School ceasefires. Yet again, Russian occupation troops and their proxies violated them almost immediately. In breach of the Minsk agreements, Russia keeps its regular military in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and continues to supply heavy weapons and ammunition to the occupation troops. It flatly denies the establishment of the OSCE permanent control over the Ukraine-Russia border, and the release of hostages within the Minsk process is completely deadlocked.

The list of Ukrainian hostages in Donbas grows constantly. People are captured deliberately. Their only fault is that they have a pro-Ukrainian position. We remember the fate of 16-year-old Stepan Chubenko, who was killed with five shots in the head after Russians saw him wearing a Ukrainian ribbon. Another example is the 63-year-old Donetsk theologian Ihor Kozlovsky, who has been in jail for over two years under false accusations and deprived of any communication with his family and friends. Russia still keeps at least 16 Ukrainian political prisoners on its territory. Ukrainian film director Oleh Sentsov and Ukrainian journalist Roman Suschenko are among the most prominent cases.

Just think about it. Stealing other nations' land, kidnapping people, conducting a hidden war, downing a civilian aircraft, spreading lies globally — is this the kind of behaviour we expect from a permanent member of the Security Council? Russia is not a contributor to international security, but its biggest threat. Russia is perhaps the only country in the world that has conflicts — hot, frozen or potential — with almost all its neighbours.

The key problem in Donbas is that Ukraine and Russia strive for completely different things. Ukraine wants peace and restoration of sovereignty over its territory. Russia wants control over Ukraine and undermines every effort to restore our sovereign control within Ukraine's borders. To that end, Russia tries to exchange peace in Ukraine for Ukraine's freedom. I want to utter a very strong message — Ukraine will never accept that kind of a deal, nor will the international community.The latest hybrid peacekeeping proposals from Moscow are yet another example of Russia's real ambitions: to legalize its proxies and to freeze the conflict forever.

We would welcome any proposal that would bring peace to my country. We remain convinced that a full-fledged United Nations peacekeeping operation is the only viable solution to de-escalate, to protect people of Ukraine and to get us closer to a political solution. That is why the peacekeepers' mandate should cover the entire occupied area, including the Ukrainian-Russian State border. That is the must. As long as the border is used as the main supply route for manpower and weapons to Donbas, there will be no peace in my country.

The mission should respect basic United Nations peacekeeping principles and guidelines. One of them is that United Nations peacekeepers should be impartial. There is no place for the aggressor's personnel. They cannot be a part of it by definition. Let me stress that any abuse of the United Nations peacekeeping toolbox to secure the gains of aggression is absolutely unacceptable. If we have an opportunity to bring peace to the heart of Europe, we should get the conditions right. A robust international presence can also help us cope with the increase in terrorist activities in the conflict-affected areas. The terrorist component in Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine is clearly visible and has become a reality of everyday life in Donbas.

Three years ago, the world was stunned when Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17, with 298 people on board, was blown up in the skies over Donbas. Ukraine is determined to do everything to bring to justice those responsible for that mass murder. Two investigations, technical and criminal, have been carried out. Both revealed the details. Those who were behind that horrible crime came from Russia. The missile came from Russia. The death of the MH-17 victims is on Russia's conscience. The five countries that comprise the Joint Investigation Team have decided to prosecute those responsible for downing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 within the Dutch judicial system.

This year, the International Court of Justice started hearing the case brought by Ukraine against Russia for the violation of the 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, and we hope that the decision of the United Nations highest court will help bring the Russian Federation to justice for its numerous violations of international law and for financing crimes committed since 2014. As the process begins, we count on the support and facilitation of all States Members of the United Nations.

For decades, Ukraine has served as a resolute contributor to global security. In the name of peace and in exchange for security assurances, Ukraine gave up its nuclear arsenal — the third-largest in the world. Twenty years after being invaded by one of those who were bound to respect and, if necessary, to protect Ukraine's border, we neverthless remain a resolute advocate of global non-proliferation and disarmament.

That is why we strongly condemn the nuclear tests and multiple launches of ballistic missiles by North Korea. We are deeply concerned about the continuous diversion of resources from critical human needs to fuel Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal, coupled with serious human rights abuses. We resolutely stand for reinforced measures to stop Pyongyang's illegal activities and to bring North Korea into line with the international legal framework. At the same time, let me reiterate Ukraine's call on the Security Council to undertake an in-depth investigation into developments in the North Korean nuclear and missiles programme in order to expose any possible foreign assistant to Pyongyang in that area.

We also express our deepest concern over the current situation in Syria. We believe that the full implementation of and adherence to the word and spirit of the 2012 Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex) and Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) are absolutely vital for the settlement of the conflict in that country. What draws our special concern with regard to that bloody conflict is Russia's use of occupied Crimea as a military outpost for projecting power in Syria. As the war there rages on, a huge number of Russian military assets are deployed to Syria by ships based in the Crimean harbour.

It is also deeply disturbing that the African continent continues to suffer from numerous unresolved conflicts. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, my country has spared no effort to support the African continent in safeguarding the main principles of the international order: sovereignty, non-interference in domestic affairs, the rule of law and peaceful settlement of disputes.

As the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic, we have actively supported regional and international efforts to stabilize the situation in the Central African Republic. In January 2017, Ukraine assumed the chairmanship of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan, and we are determined to contribute to the international efforts to resolve the conflict in Darfur. African countries can fully count on Ukraine as their reliable friend.

My country is fully committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite heavy defence expenses — more than 5 per cent of our gross domestic product — Ukraine continues to go through a fundamental transformation, fighting corruption, promoting judicial reform, implementing decentralization and improving business opportunities. A year and a half ago, the economic situation in Ukraine was so dire that we could only dream about macroeconomic stabilization. Now we have grounds to say that economic recovery is in place. Among our priorities within the 2030 Development Agenda in Ukraine are such areas as ensuring a sustainable energy supply, food security, promoting innovation, development and sustainable infrastructure, as well as promoting an effective public health system, affordable education and decent work.

I am convinced that no country alone can achieve sustainable development without sustainable peace and sustainable security. There is also no doubt that the mitigation of global warming remains an indispensable element of sustainable development. I am proud that Ukraine is fully committed to our obligations under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Our intentions in that regard are very serious. Ukraine was the first European country to deposit its instrument of ratification with the United Nations.

The United Nations has always played a leading role in ensuring that the crimes of the past can never happen again. The seventy-second session of the General Assembly coincides with the eighty-fifth anniversary of one of the deadliest crimes of the twentieth century — the Holodomor. It was a man-made famine in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933, organized by the totalitarian regime of Stalin, which killed from 7 million to 10 million Ukrainians. Mr. Raphael Lemkin, the author of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the General Assembly in 1948, described the destruction of the Ukrainian nation as a classic example of genocide. I appeal to all United Nations States Members to make their own historic judgment and to make a decision to recognize the Holodomor as an act of genocide.

This is a challenging time for all of us. Ever more people die in wars and natural disasters. Truth is blindsided by post-truth. The world is divided again between those who believe that freedom is indispensable and those who believe that freedom is expendable. One group wants to reach a better future, the other drags us to the past. It is time for those who believe in freedom to come together. It is time for freedom to be strong, convincing and convinced. Let it be that way.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Ukraine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the State of Palestine.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Abbas (*spoke in Arabic*): Twenty-four years have passed since the signing of the Oslo Accords, an interim agreement that set a five-year period for bringing an end to the Israeli occupation, giving hope to the Palestinian people that they would soon achieve independence within their State and peace between Palestinians and Israelis. What is left of that hope today? We recognized the State of Israel within the 1967 borders, but Israel's continued refusal to do the same has called into question the mutual recognition that we signed in Oslo in 1993.

Since my address to the Assembly last year (see A/71/PV.14), when I urged us to make 2017 the year for ending the Israeli occupation of the territory of the State of Palestine, the Israeli Government has relentlessly pursued its settlement campaign on our land, in contravention of all international conventions and the relevant resolutions on the question of Palestine. It has also persisted in its flagrant disregard for reaching a two-State solution, resorting to delaying policies and tactics and devising pretexts to evade its responsibility for ending its occupation of the territory of the State of Palestine. Instead of addressing the underlying issues and resolving the root causes of the conflict, it has tried to divert international attention to secondary issues that in fact are caused by its colonial policies.

While we continue to call — as does the international community — for an end to the Israeli occupation of our State's territory, Israel incites trouble and makes false accusations, pretends that there is no Palestinian partner and imposes unreasonable, obstructive conditions. Israel is well aware, as we all are, that its occupation breeds provocations and violence. Its military occupation of our land has now lasted for more than half a century.

Ten years ago, in a decision made by the United States, we agreed together to establish a tripartite committee to address the issue of incitement, made up of the United States, Palestine and Israel. The committee worked for some time but was eventually disbanded, and since then we have called for its revival, to no avail. Who is committing incitement now? And who is trying to maintain it? It is therefore very strange to hear some of those who should be responsible for ending the occupation refer to it as a half-occupation, or an alleged occupation.

What is meant by "alleged occupation"? For 50 years we have languished under the yoke of occupation, and now someone who is responsible says that this is an alleged occupation. That is unfair, wrong and unacceptable. Israel's continuation of the occupation is an affront to the international community. The United Nations has a legal, political, moral and humanitarian obligation to end it and enable the Palestinian people to live in freedom and prosperity in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital and within the 4 June 1967 borders. That is the responsibility of the United Nations and the international community.

There can be no doubt that draining the quagmire of the colonial occupation of our land and ending its unjust, oppressive and illegal practices against our people would have an enormous effect on the fight against terrorism, thereby depriving terrorist groups of one of the key rallying cries they exploit to promote their obscurantist ideas. We therefore reiterate that it is vitally urgent to end the Israeli occupation of our land, since it is an integral part of the efforts that we must

all make to confront such groups. Palestinians oppose all internal and international terrorist organizations, whatever their nature, origins or character. We stand against international terrorism and we are fighting it.

We have explored every avenue and exerted enormous efforts to achieve peace with our Israeli neighbours. Together with other Arab and Islamic States, we have adopted the invaluable Arab Peace Initiative, aimed at resolving the Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflict. The Initiative states that upon Israel's withdrawal from the Palestinian and Arab territories — the Golan and Shaba'a farmlands — occupied since 1967, the Arab and Islamic States will recognize Israel and normalize relations with it. What has been the Israeli response? Fifty-seven Arab and Islamic States have said that they are ready to recognize and normalize relations with Israel, but Israel is not interested.

In 2003, there was also the 2003 Quartet road map for an Israeli-Palestinian peace, endorsed by the Security Council and accepted by Palestine. It, too, was rejected by the Israeli Government — so apparently Israel is above the law. Next, a French-led initiative for peace attempted to break the stalemate in the peace process and ensure a successful effort to salvage the peace process and a two-State solution. It led to the convening earlier this year in Paris of the Conference for Peace in the Middle East, which was attended by 70 States and four international organizations. Israel has rejected and boycotted all of those efforts. Besides those I have already mentioned, President Vladimir Putin of Russia and President Xi Jinping of China have also launched initiatives for peace. The latest of those peace efforts — all of which we are grateful for — is being led by United States President Donald Trump. Where are those initiatives and why will Israel not accept them?

For our part, we have also repeatedly tried to revive the peace process. We have called on the Israeli Prime Minister simply to affirm his commitment to a two-State solution and sit with us at the negotiation table to delineate the borders between Israel and the State of Palestine in order to open a path for meaningful talks on resolving all the other final status issues. Unfortunately, he rejected that offer. We have continued our genuine efforts to achieve a successful peace process, and Israel nonetheless continues to ignore its commitments and obstruct those efforts through its relentless settlement activities. There is no place left for the State of Palestine, and that is unacceptable both to us and to those here in this Hall. The fact is that Israel is rejecting a two-State solution, posing a real threat to Israelis and Palestinians alike. We will therefore be compelled to undertake a comprehensive strategic review of the entire process.

A commitment to peace by one side is never enough to achieve peace. Either we are free or not free. We have issued warnings in the past, and continue to do so today, about the Israeli policies aimed at entrenching the occupation and colonial facts on the ground in East Jerusalem. We have pointed out that those policies fuel religious animosity and could lead to a violent religious conflict. We have called on the Israeli Government to uphold the historic and legal status quo of the city's holy sites. However, since its occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967, the Israeli Government has repeatedly and unilaterally annexed Jerusalem. Jerusalem is occupied. It also decided to annex Golan, and did so. We rejected that at the time and continue to do so, together with the entier international community, including the Security Council.

The Security Council, the principal world authority on peace and security, has adopted numerous resolutions stating that such annexation processes are illegal. To whom should we turn? Since the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions are not being implemented, to whom should we turn? We have not chosen a path of terrorism or violence. Jerusalem is an occupied city. Israel's decisions and practices there are null and void and entirely illegal. The same applies to all the Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory.

Israel's attempts to change the historic status quo in Al-Quds and particularly the status and integrity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque can be described only as playing with fire and an infringement on our responsibilities and those of our brother country Jordan. We are both responsible for the city. We have warned the Israeli Government about the implications of such an act of aggression and will hold it fully responsible for the consequences. We do not desire a religious war, which would be dangerous for everyone. Our conflict is political, not religious, so let us leave religious issues out of the equation.

Despite the ongoing occupation and its oppressive policies and practices, we have been working effectively to build the institutions of our State, which has been recognized by a majority — 138 of those present — of the States Members of the United Nations. I would like

to take this opportunity to once again thank all of the countries that have recognized the State of Palestine and have voted for upgrading its status at the United Nations. That is certainly helping to remedy the historic injustice that has befallen our people and showing support for the goal of peace between the Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East and around the world.

I also stressed in my address to the Assembly last year that the status quo in the occupied territory of the State of Palestine is unsustainable. However, since the situation has only deteriorated, owing to Israel's insistence on pursuing its occupation, aggressive policies and unending violations of international law, we must once again call on Israel, as the occupying Power, to fully respect and uphold all the obligations that its occupation implies and bear the consequences.

We cannot continue to be an Authority that has no authority or to allow the occupation to continue at no cost. We are fast approaching that point. If Israel does not want a two-State solution, if it does not want peace, let it assume its responsibilities and bear their consequences, because we will not bear those responsibilities for them. Today a two-State solution is in jeopardy. As Palestinians, we cannot stand still in the face of that threat, which is targeting our national, political and social existence on our land and endangering regional and international peace and security. We will have to take steps or look for alternatives in order to preserve our national existence and maintain the prospects for peace and security. But any option we try will be peaceful.

In such a situation, we have the right to seek alternatives that preserve our rights and protect our land and our people from a hardening system of the type of apartheid that ended in South Africa long ago but that continues to persist in Palestine. Is that acceptable? Can the world accept an apartheid regime in the twenty-first century in Palestine? Why, then, is there one?

On the other hand, we have called on the International Criminal Court, which is our right. If nobody wants to listen to us, then we will pursue all avenues to justice. We have called on the International Criminal Court to open an investigation and prosecute Israeli officials for their involvement in settlement activities and aggressions against our people. We will continue to pursue our accessions to international conventions, protocols and organizations, as Palestine has acquired observer status pursuant to resolution 67/19 of 2012. I will convene the Palestinian National Council in the near future to operationalize a strategic review of these efforts.

The President took the Chair.

Palestinians, Arabs and the world as a whole have a choice as to whether to respect international law and implement the two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. We will give the efforts being undertaken by President Donald Trump, the Quartet and the international community at large every chance to succeed so that a historic agreement or deal may be reached. We have heard that they are trying to strike a historic deal. We would like to thank them and hope that it will come to fruition soon.

We stress the two-State solution, which would enable the State of Palestine to live side-by-side with the State of Israel in security and peace. But if the two-State solution were to be fall apart due to the establishment of a one-State reality with two systems — a system of apartheid — following the unchecked imposition of the occupation that our people and the international community reject, that would be a failure, and neither the international community nor we will have any other choice but to continue the struggle and demand full and equal rights for all inhabitants of historic Palestine. This is not a threat, but we are warning Israel of the realities and the consequences of its ongoing policies that are gravely undermining the two-State solution. What do the Israelis want? Even if they talk about other issues, we continue to choose the two-State solution.

Our problem is with the Israeli colonial occupation, not with Judaism as a religion. Judaism for us Palestinians, be they Christian or Muslim, will never be considered a threat. It is an Abrahamic religion, like Islam and Christianity. God Almighty tells us in the Qur'an that, in the name of God the Compassionate and the Merciful, we should not distinguish between his messengers. Indeed, all His messengers — Mohammed, Jesus and others — are equal. All these religions are equal, and we do not make distinctions between prophets or messengers. On this occasion, we congratulate the Jews on their new year. We would also like to congratulate Muslims for their new Hijri year starting tomorrow. This is proof of our desire for a rapprochement among religions.

We have dutifully upheld our responsibilities towards our people in the Gaza Strip despite the split with Hamas that has been in place since 2007. Since that

time, we have provided all forms of support on our own to our people in Gaza, who are gravely suffering from the cruel Israeli blockade. We have repeatedly affirmed that no one is more aware of the interests of our people in Gaza Strip than we are. We are eager to see to the interests of the people in Gaza served. We have said that there will be no State in Gaza alone and there will be no Palestinian State without the Gaza Strip. A State in Gaza alone is a false dream, and our State will be complete only when the Gaza Strip is part of it.

I must express my relief at the agreement reached in Cairo as a result of Egyptian efforts. We are grateful for those efforts aimed at nullifying the measures taken by Hamas following the split with us, including the formation of a Government. The Hamas Government has been cancelled, and there is now a commitment to the National Unity Government, which is a Government of national consensus, which will enable it to exercise its authority in the Gaza Strip and allow for general elections to be held. This agreement has met with our satisfaction. Next week, our Government is going to the Gaza Strip to assume its responsibilities. We wish the Government every success.

In my address to the General Assembly last year, I appealed to the Government of the United Kingdom to rectify the grave injustice it inflicted upon the Palestinian people when, in 1917, it issued the Balfour Declaration, promising Jews a national homeland in Palestine, despite the fact that Palestine was inhabited by the Palestinian people. Some 97 per cent of the population of Palestine at that time were Palestinians, who were disregarded. Again, Palestine at that time was inhabited by the Palestinian people and was among the most progressive and prosperous countries in the region. It should not have been colonized or placed under the mandate of a great Power. The British Government has not taken a single step to date to correct this historical injustice against our people. It should apologize, provide us with reparations and recognize the State of Palestine. We talked to its representatives at length and so far they have not provided a response. What is even worse is that in November they want to celebrate the centenary of this crime against our people.

The silence of the international community with respect to Israel's aggressive policies has emboldened the country to continue its policies. I would remind the Assembly that, since its establishment, Israel has violated numerous provisions of international law. It has violated the Charter of the United Nations and continues to do so. It has violated General Assembly resolutions 181 (II), 194 (III) and Security Council resolution 242 (1967). We would recall that Article 42 of the Charter of the United Nations provides for the possible use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security. This could apply to those who conduct acts of aggression against the land of others.

Israel has taken a large part of our territory and was not deterred from doing so by the United Nations. Resolution 194 (III) provided for the return of refugees at that time. However, the United Nations did not adopt any follow-up resolution. Security Council resolutions have called for withdrawal from the occupied territories. Where are those resolutions? If the United Nations cannot implement its resolutions, who will? Israel does not want to. Is Israel above the law? There are double standards in dealing with different countries. That is the Assembly's responsibility.

To salvage the peace process and the two-State solution, I urge the Organization and its Member States to adopt the following measures.

First, they should actively pursue efforts to bring an end to the Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine within a set time frame. It is no longer enough to issue generic statements calling for the end to the occupation and the achievement of peace without a deadline. Efforts must be made to implement the Arab Peace Initiative, including a just solution for the Palestinian refugee question, in accordance with resolution 194 (III). The Arab Peace Initiative addressed the issue of refugees very well in referring to a just and agreed-upon solution, not one imposed upon a certain party, in accordance with resolution 194 (III). Israel disregarded those resolutions, riding roughshod over them. To whom should we complain?

Second, they should act to bring to a halt to all settlement activities in occupied Palestinian land, as demanded in numerous United Nations resolutions, including the most recent Security Council resolution, 2334 (2016), in addition to the operative paragraphs of the Fourth Geneva Convention. An occupying Power should not expel the people from their land. This is in the text of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Who is responsible for implementing those texts? Israel refuses to do so. What is the international community doing?

Third, the Organization and Member States should ensure international protection to the lands and people of the State of Palestine until the occupation ends,

as we are unable to provide protection to our people. Given all the forces, the arms that we are facing every day, who will protect us if the Member States do not? Many times we have put forward draft resolutions, but they are in vain.

Fourth, they should demand that Israel endorse and commit to the borders of 1967 as the basis for the two-State solution and set such borders in line with international resolutions. Once we delineate the borders, each party can act in its territory as it pleases without affecting or damaging the rights of the other party. Israel builds wherever it wants today, demolishing houses every day; even schools and hospitals are being demolished. Nobody raises an eyebrow.

Fifth, I must ask all the Member States of the United Nations that have recognized Israel to state that they have recognized Israel on the basis of the 1967 borders, thereby aligning themselves with international resolutions and reaffirming their commitment to those resolutions — even those who recognized Israel on the basis of resolution 181 (II). Resolution 181 (II) was violated. Hence my question: where are the borders of Israel that Member States are recognizing? How can Member States recognize a State that has no borders? Israel has not even decided on its own borders. Yet international law states that a State is a land with borders. But Israel has no borders. How can one recognize a State that has no clearly demarcated borders?

Sixth, I call on all States to end all forms of direct and indirect involvement with, and support to, the illegal Israeli colonial settlement regime on the land of the occupied State of Palestine, in accordance with United Nations resolutions and the affirmed positions of States in that regard. Such action would be similar to the international community's approach to the apartheid regime in South Africa. We should not deal with settlements. We should not condone settlements. The black list of countries that are dealing illegally with Israeli settlements should be exposed.

Seventh, I urge those States that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine to do so. I do not understand how recognizing the State of Palestine within the 1967 borders harms the chances of peace. There could be minor amendments agreed between the two parties, but the basis is 1967, so our borders are well known. Where are the borders of Israel? How can recognizing the State of Palestine harm the chances of peace, especially since we Palestinians have recognized the State of Israel within the 1967 borders?

Eighth, we look to the Security Council to approve our application for full membership of the State of Palestine in the United Nations. What do we lack? What is missing? Every day we prove that we are eligible for such status. All those who support the two-State solution should recognize two States, not one State — Palestine and Israel. If a Member State recognizes Israel, it should recognize Palestine.

Ninth, we urge the international community to continue providing economic and financial support to the Palestinian people to achieve self-reliance. If the occupation ends we will say "thank you". We will be self-reliant. Unfortunately, because we are under occupation, we can only seek assistance, and we are grateful to the international community because it is providing assistance. Help us to rid ourselves of the occupation, and we will thank Member States for their help.

We also urge the international community to continue providing support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to enable it to continue providing humanitarian assistance. In that connection, we warn against attempts to eliminate item 7 on the agenda of the Human Rights Council, or to change the mandate of UNRWA.

Efforts are also under way to obstruct the issuance of the list of companies operating in Israeli settlements. That is a black list. Why should we hide that list? It is similar to terrorism. Everybody should see the list to know who violates international law and who respects such law.

Tenth, we once again affirm our commitment to respecting human rights and international conventions, and to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and all other treaties and conventions that we have acceded to. We respect everything that we have acceded to or adopted, and we go hand in hand with the international community, of which we are part of.

The State of Palestine will reflect those imperatives, where appropriate, in the draft resolutions to be presented to the General Assembly. We call on the Assembly to vote in favour of those draft resolutions, with the clear aim of preserving the two-State solution,

salvaging and promoting peace and achieving security and stability and prosperity for both Israelis and Palestinians and for the people of the entire region.

In conclusion, allow me to salute our great people, who remain steadfast in their homeland despite their suffering and peaceful struggle against foreign occupation. The culture of peace is prevailing among Palestinians. Those joining Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front are not from Palestine.

I salute our people of Jerusalem, who exhibited one of the most shining examples of peaceful popular resistance against the Israeli colonial occupation. When they were prevented from praying, they prayed outside — they prayed and were victorious. I salute our people in exile and in the diaspora. I salute our people who remain steadfast in the West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip. I salute our glorious martyrs and our courageous prisoners in Israeli prisons.

I tell them all that freedom is coming and is inevitable and that the occupation will come to an end. That will come about either with the independence of the State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel on the 1967 borders, or, if Israel chooses, with equal rights for all of the inhabitants of the land of historic Palestine from the river to the sea. Which will they accept?

When South Africa was liberated from the apartheid regime, Nelson Mandela said that he was grateful to the whole world and the United Nations, which contributed to and supported the end of apartheid in South Africa. Mandela added that their victory would not be complete until the Palestinian people were victorious. We, together with the Assembly, are entrusted to end the apartheid in Palestine — person by person, State by State, including the super-Powers. All of us should stand together. It is a commitment that should be fulfilled. Will the Assembly fulfil its duty? I very much hope so.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the State of Palestine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council

The President: The Assembly will hear a statement by the President of the European Council.

Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Tusk (European Council): The European Union (EU) stands for freedom and a credible rules-based global order, because that order is a real sine qua non condition for peace, stability and a global economy that works for everyone. An alternative to that order is chaos, which always encourages violence, egoism and extremism.

The United Nations is the best tool we have to address, on a global scale, today's conflicts, famine, forced displacement, terrorism and a return to nuclear tensions. For the EU and its member States, it is imperative that the United Nations rise to those challenges. That is why, together, we contribute approximately one third of United Nations core financing, make one third of United Nations peacekeeping contributions and put in half of all voluntary contributions to United Nations funds and programmes.

However, we also expect the United Nations to become a more energetic and a less bureaucratic Organization that can act with clarity and purpose in all its actions. Therefore, the EU considers the ideas for reforming the United Nations currently on the table as the necessary minimum. What is needed is more ambition, not less.

The United Nations remains a vital forum for debate and a tool to implement our collective will, even if it has declined in popular esteem in recent years. I take the action by the Security Council on 11 September (see S/PV.8042) to sanction North Korea for carrying out more nuclear testing as a sign that the capacity for real leadership and unity is present. Nevertheless, it is still too little. No country should be allowed to undermine the global non-proliferation regime or to threaten peaceful countries. Together with Japan and South

Korea, our close friends and strategic partners, the European Union calls for a peaceful denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. We also call on all concerned to uphold the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran as a multilateral deal that is delivering more security for us all.

Europe also wants to work in partnership with African countries on challenges ranging from security and counter-terrorism to economic growth and job creation. We look forward to advancing those goals together at the African-European summit in Ivory Coast at the end of November. The European Union is already cooperating closely with United Nations missions on peacekeeping and conflict prevention in Mali, the Central African Republic and other conflict zones.

We are also doing our best to alleviate a major humanitarian crisis, affecting more than 20 million people, in the Lake Chad basin, South Sudan and Somalia. Yet more needs to be done. Now is the time to wake up to those escalating situations before it is really too late.

When it comes to the global refugee crisis, the EU continues to assume its responsibility by receiving people in need of protection and by assisting host countries closer to the conflict zones. For three years now, the EU has appealed to the international community to take up its responsibility for refugee protection and irregular migration. I am doing the same today. In that context, the European Union is actively supporting the United Nations process to develop global compacts for refugees and for regular, safe and orderly migration. The engagement of Member States is needed right now, both in terms of money for humanitarian assistance and more resettlement for those displaced by conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Myanmar and especially across Africa.

At the same time, we should crack down on human smugglers, who exploit vulnerable people and violate sovereign borders. I welcome that the International Criminal Court Prosecutor is investigating the smugglers in Libya for crimes against humanity. We should treat them, via a system of international sanctions, just as harshly as those engaged in terrorism and piracy. The European Union calls on international agencies to increase their presence on the ground in Libya immediately, so that we can work to improve the situation of those victimized by the smugglers.

The year 2017 showed us that Da'esh as a territorial entity is fated for defeat, which is good news. Sadly, however, repeated terrorist attacks, including in Europe, demonstrate that the threat continues. We need to keep on strengthening the global fight against terrorism and violent extremism. In short, we must be more determined than they are.

Doing more on counter-radicalization within the United Nations is badly needed. We welcome the establishment by the industry of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism to work in tandem with United Nations structures. The European Union has called on the major online companies to develop, as a priority, the means for automatic deletion of extremist content immediately after posting. To the Muslim leaders of the world, I repeat the appeal I made after the London Bridge attack in June: their strong stance against Islamist extremism will be a real support in the fight against terrorism.

Finally, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is the cornerstone of global efforts to tackle climate change in an effective way and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The EU remains determined to implement the Agreement swiftly and fully and to support our partners, in particular vulnerable countries, in the fight against climate change. We will work with all partners that share our conviction that the Agreement is necessary to protect our planet, that it is fit for purpose and that, in turn, it is good for economic growth and future jobs.

We meet at a time when the world is poised between hope and fear. The global economy and trade are expanding, but security tensions are rising and global cooperation is being increasingly questioned. Making international action robust, credible and transformative is the challenge. The European Union will never give up working with and within the United Nations until we meet this challenge.

The European Union and the United Nations were created in answer to the atrocities of the Second World War. That is why our European priority will always be to react vigorously against evil, violence and lawlessness in international life. When confronting evil, the EU and the United Nations cannot hesitate.

In our political life there are situations that are black and white and are crystal clear, such as the case of North Korea's nuclear blackmail, terrorism, and the aggression on Ukraine. It is in such cases that we need to demonstrate that we are still able to distinguish between good and evil. Sometimes that takes courage,

but the United Nations is not there to cowardly look for a compromise with evil, but to mobilize the global community in the fight against it. Therefore a moral judgment of reality, clear and univocal, should be the first principle of our common action.

Many people in the world still believe that in this Hall have gathered those who have not given up on the ethical dimension of politics in the name of their own egoistic interests. Let us show them that their trust is justified.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the European Council for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Rutte (Netherlands): Every era and every decade has its problems, great and small. The problems we face now seem overwhelming. These days many people worry about the future, which is understandable. The past few years have been marked by terrorist attacks all over the world.

In countries like Myanmar, Syria, the Central African Republic and Yemen, the population is suffering as a result of wars and conflicts. More and more people are fleeing their homes because of violence, scarcity or poverty, leaving behind everything they have. Only recently, floods claimed lives in the United States and Asia, and Hurricane Irma has left a trail of destruction in its wake, including in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Nuclear issues are once again a major concern, and geopolitical tensions are increasing.

That is the picture today. But if we take a long-term perspective — and, as a historian, I like to do that — there are grounds for optimism. This building here in New York — United Nations Headquarters — is concrete proof that progress is possible. Here in this inviolable international zone, thousands of people from every continent work together to foster peace, justice and development in a world governed by international law. That is no easy task, far from it. But advances are being made. Sometimes we take three steps forward and two steps back, but if one takes a long-term view, one can see clear progress.

Think back to when the United Nations was established in 1945. Europe lay in ruins, as did Asia. Two nuclear bombs had been dropped on Japan. The Cold War was around the corner and would hold the world in its grip for decades. But the destruction caused by two world wars united the nations of the world in a shared belief that it should never happen again.Franklin D. Roosevelt put it this way in February 1945:

> "The point in history at which we stand is full of promise and of danger. The world will either move towards unity and widely shared prosperity or it will move apart".

The world of today is indeed a much better world, and not just geopolitically. In 2015 we took stock of the progress we had made on the Millennium Development Goals. Extreme poverty and maternal mortality had been halved, and child mortality had been almost halved. Ninety per cent of children in developing countries are now receiving primary education. Despite all the very real problems that confront us today, I still see grounds for optimism. We cannot change the world overnight, but we can improve the lives of individuals step by step. And we are doing so.

The United Nations plays a crucial role in those achievements. The United Nations is the only organization where everyone sits at the table, and remains there. While other institutions struggle with an increasing lack of credibility, faith in the added value of the United Nations remains strong among the world's citizens. We must not let them down.

The Netherlands and its Kingdom partners Curaçao, Aruba and Sint Maarten have always attached great importance to cooperation within the United Nations. Our small, outward-looking kingdom could not exist without strong multilateral institutions and an effective international legal order. As a trading

nation, our prosperity depends on a stable world. And after the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 disaster and attacks in neighbouring countries, the people of the Netherlands are increasingly aware that our domestic security depends on cooperation with other countries. It is very important to the Netherlands and to the victims' next of kin that justice is seen to be done for those who perished on Flight MH-17. It has been agreed that the next step — the prosecution and trial of those responsible — will take place in the Netherlands. We are working with all the countries involved to make that possible.

The problems confronting today's world — climate change, migration, food security, terrorism and cybercrime — are by definition international. No single country can tackle them in isolation. We need each other. Instead of becoming more inward-looking, as united nations we need to take a step outwards. In this turbulent world, the importance of the United Nations is growing every day.

Next year, the Kingdom of the Netherlands will be even more focused on the United Nations. In January 2018, we begin our one-year term on the Security Council, taking over from Italy. This shared arrangement is a good example of European partnership within international organizations. We would like to see more such cooperation. Our two countries even share some of the same priorities, such as tackling people-smuggling in Libya, an issue that is of great concern to the whole of Europe.

For next year, as a temporary member of the Security Council, we have set three priorities: a strong United Nations and a secure and sustainable world. We will work in a transparent way to achieve that goal, each element of which is equally important.

The first priority, a strong United Nations, is essential. For that, reform and modernization are crucial. As the new Secretary-General, António Guterres, has said, "The onus falls on the United Nations to prove its worth". He has been active from day one, working to adapt the United Nations to new realities. His ambitious agenda inspires confidence for the future. The Kingdom of the Netherlands supports his vision and approach, and I would like to take this opportunity to call for a joint effort to implement his reform plans. It is time to follow through. And I do not only mean the Secretary-General, but all of us here in this great Hall. Saying that the onus falls on the United Nations means that the onus falls on us.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands wants to see a more effective and efficient United Nations, with better cooperation among the various agencies. After all, the fields in which the United Nations is active — human rights, peace and security, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — are all inextricably linked. The Netherlands already works in this way. We call it the 3-D approach: an integrated effort to tackle development, defence and diplomacy.

We would also like to see the role of the Resident Coordinator reinforced. Moreover, the United Nations will have to work in a results-oriented way, adopt a more modern personnel policy and bolster its internal transparency and accountability. Those are all issues that we will press for in the coming period.

Our second priority next year is of course security. The key word here is "prevention". We are not devoting enough attention to the early stages of conflict development. That has to change. We need an organization equipped and ready for action at all stages of conflict. That is already happening in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), in which the Netherlands is participating and will continue to participate in 2018. What is new is that we are using intelligence to carry out long-range reconnaissance missions. In that way, we can anticipate conflict, instead of waiting for it to come our way.

We see MINUSMA as a model for future missions. However, we need not only better intelligence, but also task-oriented training for United Nations personnel, high-grade equipment and a clear mandate. This year the Kingdom of the Netherlands is co-organizing the United Nations Peacekeeping Conference in Vancouver. There, we will press for rotation schedules to ensure timely deployment and rotation of both personnel and materiel. That will make countries more willing to participate and extend the potential lifespan of a mission.

Counter-terrorism is another issue on which the United Nations is rightly focusing more and more. After all, the United Nations is the prime forum for global norm-setting and international cooperation in the field. When it comes to preventing terrorism, cooperation is key. A good example of such cooperation is the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF), which

the Netherlands co-chairs together with Morocco. There, 29 countries work together to achieve a single goal: to keep our citizens safe. It is producing concrete results. For instance, at least 60 countries and the United Nations now contribute foreign terrorist profiles to INTERPOL. INTERPOL already has over 16,000 profiles. When the GCTF was set up, it had fewer than 1,000. That work is not high profile — most of it goes on behind the scenes — but it saves many lives.

The prevention of violence and conflict ties in with our third priority — sustainability — and with it, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs precede everything I have just discussed. They are the ultimate prevention agenda. They address the drivers and root causes of instability and conflict. Investing in human dignity, eradicating poverty, fostering climate resilience and promoting economic and social progress will reduce the incidence of conflict, instability and despair — development and lasting peace, all in one package.

The Netherlands and its Kingdom partners Curaçao, Aruba and Sint Maarten are working together to implement the SDGs. We believe that the key to success in attaining the Goals is our willingness to form partnerships at the national and international levels with businesses, civil society organizations, knowledge institutions, local authorities and youth organizations. Working together across sectors is part of our country's tradition.

Our most important area of expertise is water management. Much of the Netherlands lies below sea level, so we have centuries of experience in water technology, urban delta management and maritime technology, expertise that we are keen to share with the rest of the world. Working together on water issues is more crucial than ever before. Nearly five years have elapsed since thousands of people here in New York had to flee their homes when the streets flooded in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. The destruction caused by Harvey in Texas and the floods in Asia show that water issues have only become more urgent in the last five years.

The impact of climate change on the water cycle is brought home to us every day, all over the world, sometimes violently. The people of Sint Maarten, in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, are struggling to cope with the devastation caused by Hurricane Irma.

The United Nations now predicts that 200 million people will have become displaced by 2050 because of climate change. Water therefore plays a key role in achieving almost all of the SDGs. We learn most by working with others and by sharing knowledge. We deploy our expertise all over the world — for example, in projects in Viet Nam, Peru, Myanmar and Bangladesh. That is one of the reasons that I am a member of the High-level Panel on Water.

This Hall, this building and all members of the Assembly represent one of the greatest achievements of humankind: all the nations working together in partnership to foster peace, justice and development in the world. This is a unique Organization, which entails a heavy responsibility. In such turbulent times, the United Nations needs to prove its worth more than ever. Adlai Stevenson, an American politician who experienced two world wars and died when the Cold War was at its height, once said,

> "The United Nations is like a spade; it is not self-operating. It is what we make of it, for purposes that we can find in common with our neighbours in the world."

I could not agree more. We face great problems in the present age. Conflict and natural disasters affect the lives of many and cause widespread concern. In this unstable world, the United Nations represents stability and a chance to shape the world for the good. We need to make progress with the reforms proposed by Secretary-General Guterres. Let us consider what we have achieved in recent decades. As they say, past results are no guarantee of future performance, but they do represent a promise for the future. Let us do all we can to make good on that promise, because together we can make the United Nations a success. In the year ahead, the Kingdom of the Netherlands will commit itself fully to that endeavour.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Japan.

Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Abe (Japan) (*spoke in Japanese; English text provided by the delegation*): I had intended to begin today by speaking of the sincerity with which Japan is implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, and I hoped to introduce the innovative ways by which we have been fostering public awareness of those Goals within Japan. I wanted to explain why the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative is important to me personally and to the Government of Japan. I have been saying we will make universal health coverage part of the Japan brand, and in December we will hold a major conference in Tokyo with that theme.

The list of points I would have liked to raise here is long indeed — our contributions towards the rule of law, our determination to be steadfast in undertaking the Paris Agreement and our policy of addressing global infrastructure demand through quality investments. Moreover, what Japan wants to safeguard in every respect is the free, liberal, open international order and multilateral frameworks.

The world certainly holds high expectations towards the United Nations as the flag-bearer upholding those values. That is exactly why the Security Council should be reformed without delay, in response to the demands of the times. Japan will strive, together with its friends, to achieve such reforms. I had intended to state that Japan's abiding determination is to play an active role for world peace as a permanent member of the Security Council. However, I have no choice but to focus my remarks on a single issue, that of North Korea.

North Korea conducted a nuclear test on 3 September. Whether or not it was a hydrogen bomb test, its scale far exceeded that of previous tests. Before and after that, on 29 August and again on 15 September — before the ink was even dry on Security Council resolution 2375 (2017), adopted to impose sanctions on North Korea — North Korea launched missiles. They were launched to fly over Japan and make a display of their cruising range. The gravity of that threat is unprecedented, and it is indisputably a matter of urgency. North Korea is attempting to dismiss with a smirk the efforts towards disarmament we have assiduously undertaken over the years. The non-proliferation regime is about to suffer a serious blow from its most confident disrupter ever.

Qualitatively, that recent crisis is of an altogether different dimension than those we have eluded every time that some dictator has attempted to acquire weapons of mass destruction. North Korea's nuclear weapons either already are, or are on the verge of becoming, hydrogen bombs. Their means of delivery will sooner or later be intercontinental ballistic missile. Over more than 20 years since the end of the Cold War, where and when else, and to what dictators, have we allowed such self-indulgence? As it turns out, it is only towards North Korea that it has been allowed. That is the reality we find before us, and it was absolutely not a lack of dialogue that gave rise to the situation.

Dialogue dissuaded North Korea from pursuing its nuclear ambitions. Dialogue has afforded many of us the relief that the world had been saved from a crisis. Believing thus, many of us were relieved — not just once, but twice. The first time was in the early 1990s. At the time, the threat that North Korea imposed amounted to little more than openly displaying its withdrawal from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other inspection regimes. However, tensions were felt by those of us that surmised the intent of that.

After many twists and turns, in October 1994 what is known as the Agreed Framework was realized between the United States and North Korea. Under that framework, North Korea would be made to abandon its nuclear plans. In exchange, we would provide incentives to North Korea. To that end, Japan, the United States, and the Republic of Korea formed the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) in March the following year.

Taking KEDO as the implementing agent, we pledged to build and hand over two light-water reactors to North Korea and to provide 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil annually as a stopgap measure for its energy demand. Those steps were all carried out accordingly. However, as time went by, it came to be known that North Korea had been continuing steadily with its uranium enrichment.

From the start, North Korea had never intended to abandon its nuclear ambitions. That had become readily apparent to all. After 2002, seven years after it was founded, KEDO suspended its operations. During that period, it can be said that North Korea defrauded the United States, the Republic of Korea and Japan with

regard to assistance. Countries that recognized value in the KEDO framwork of providing incentives to change North Korea's actions gradually came to join KEDO: the European Union, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Chile, Argentina, Poland, the Czech Republic and Uzbekistan. North Korea betrayed the good faith of all those KEDO members. As one of the organization's founding members, Japan had pledged to give a non-interest loan to KEDO and had fulfilled roughly 40 per cent of that pledge — that is, about $400 million of a $1 billion pledge.

The second crisis occurred in 2002, when KEDO suspended its operations and North Korea, saying it would end the freeze on its nuclear-related facilities, expelled IAEA inspectors. The concern was again that North Korea was continuing its uranium enrichment — and again we chose the path of defusing the situation through dialogue.

North Korea, China, and Russia joined the three founding members of KEDO — Japan, the United States and the Republic of Korea — to launch the Six-Party Talks in August 2003. Subsequently, after two years of twists and turns through the summer of 2005 into autumn, the six parties finally reached an agreement resulting in the release of a joint statement. North Korea committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes and to returning to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to IAEA safeguards. Moreover, two years later, in February 2007, an agreement was concluded regarding what each of the six parties should do towards implementing the joint statement. A group of IAEA inspectors that had entered North Korea verified the shutdown of the nuclear-related facilities in Yongbyon, and in return North Korea received heavy fuel oil.

The series of events made people think that, this time, tenaciously continuing dialogue had finally caused North Korea to change its actions. But what actually happened? In February 2005, while the Six-Party Talks were under way, North Korea declared unilaterally that it was already in possession of nuclear weapons. Moreover, in October 2006, it openly carried out its first nuclear test. Its second nuclear test was in 2009. Finally, that same year, North Korea announced its withdrawal from the Six-Party Talks, stating it would never again take part in such talks. It was around that time that it was firing ballistic missiles on a repeated basis.

Over the course of more than a decade, beginning in 1994, the international community continued its efforts for dialogue with North Korea with great perseverance, first through the Agreed Framework and later through the Six-Party Talks. However, what we had to learn is that during the time that dialogue continued, North Korea had no intention whatsoever of abandoning its nuclear or missile development. For North Korea, dialogue was instead the best means of deceiving us and buying time. More than anything else, the following fact demonstrates that. In 1994, North Korea had no nuclear weapons, and even its ballistic missile technology was far from mature. Yet it is now working to attain hydrogen bombs and intercontinental ballistic missiles. Again and again, attempts to resolve issues through dialogue have all come to nought.

With what hope of success are we repeating the very same failure a third time? We must make North Korea abandon all nuclear and ballistic missile programmess in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. What is needed to do that is not dialogue, but pressure.

On 15 November, 40 years will have passed since a 13 year old girl named Megumi Yokota was abducted by North Korea. Megumi and many other abducted Japanese remain in North Korea even to this day. I will continue all possible efforts so they can set foot on Japan's soil as soon as possible. I will continue until the day when they will finally be in the arms of their parents and their family members. Japan will face up to North Korea's nuclear and missile threat through the Japan-United States alliance and through Japan, the United States and the Republic of Korea acting in unity. We consistently support the stance of the United States that all options are on the table.

Also, I appreciate the Security Council's unanimous adoption, on 11 September, of resolution 2375 (2017), which imposes strict sanctions against North Korea. That clarified our intention to further intensify pressure on North Korea in order to force it to undertake a fundamental change in its path forward. But I must make an appeal to the General Assembly. North Korea has already demonstrated its disregard of the resolution by launching yet another missile.

The resolution is nothing more than the beginning. We must prevent the goods, funds, people, and technology necessary for nuclear and missile development from heading to North Korea. We must make North Korea comply fully with the repeated resolutions. We must

ensure the strict and full implementation of the series of Security Council resolutions by all United Nations States Members. What is necessary is action. Whether or not we can put an end to the provocations by North Korea is dependent upon the solidarity of the international community. There is not much time left.

North Korea is in a truly fortunate location, adjoining the growth region of Asia and the Pacific. It has an industrious labour force as well as underground resources. If it were to make use of those, there could be a path for North Korea to dramatically grow its economy and improve public welfare. That is where North Korea's bright future lies. By failing to resolve the abduction, nuclear weapon and missile issues and by becoming a threat to all humankind, there is absolutely no future that North Korea can open up for itself. In order to change North Korea's policies, we must strengthen our unity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Japan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. António Luís Santos da Costa, Prime Minister of the Republic of Portugal

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Portugal.

Mr. António Luís Santos da Costa, Prime Minister of the Republic of Portugal, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. António Luís Santos da Costa, Prime Minister of the Republic ofPortugal, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Da Costa (Portugal) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): Let me start by expressing Portugal's condolences to and solidarity with the people and the Government of Mexico for yesterday's violent tragedy.

I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election. I welcome the priorities that you have established. Portugal fully supports an agenda centred around people and the right that we all have to live a dignified life in peace on a sustainable planet. I also wish to express a word of appreciation to your predecessor, whose dedication and successes we most readily acknowledge.

I feel deeply moved to address the peoples' Assembly today in the presence of the first Portuguese Secretary-General of the United Nations. Before the Assembly, I solemnly pledge Portugal's commitment to the United Nations and multilateralism, founded on the primacy of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The priorities of the Secretary-General are the same as ours: for a United Nations that is stronger, offers greater solidarity and is capable of preventing conflicts, alleviating human suffering and promoting peace and prosperity — a more transparent United Nations that is more effective and more adaptable to a constantly changing world. We welcome and support the dynamism that he has shown right from the start of his mandate in reforming the United Nations system so that it may better fulfil its noble purpose. Only the United Nations holds a universal vocation to respond, in concert with Member States, to the increasingly complex challenges of our time.

Reforming the peace and security architecture is an absolute priority. Consolidating a culture of conflict prevention requires action across the board and an integrated vision of the three pillars of the United Nations system — peace, human rights and sustainable development — as well as closer institutional cooperation among the principal organs of the Charter, particularly the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Achieving sustainable peace will require greater synergies in the Organization's structures and missions on the ground. The ongoing efforts should also give fresh impetus to reform of the Security Council to ensure better representation of today's world. The African continent c: nnot be denied a permanent presence, while Brazil and India are also two inescapable examples of necessart representation.

On the other hand, the complexity of the global problems we face requires us to foster partnerships, involving not only States but also civil societies, international financial institutions and public and private entities. In that connection, I recall resolution 71/324, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, adopted a few days ago, which specifically aims to

strengthen the complementarities between the two organizations.

I would also like to underscore the importance of the Portuguese language, which is today an instrument of communication with a global dimension. By the middle of this century, there will be almost 400 million speakers of the Portuguese language. That is what justified its adoption as an official language in several international organizations. The acceptance of Portuguese as one of the official languages of the United Nations remains a common stance of the member States of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries.

The Secretary-General has chosen diplomacy for peace as one of the main flags of his mandate. This idea must guide us as an international community as we react to the conflicts and crises that regrettably occur today in various parts of the world. The unity and firmness of the international community, embodied in the United Nations, in defence of law and in the promotion of security and stability is what enables us to move towards a fairer international order and to find the best solutions to the serious crises we face today — from North Korean threats to the situation in Syria, from the instability in Libya to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and so many other sources of confrontation, security risks or humanitarian tragedy.

Terrorism is a global threat that challenges all of us. Portugal strongly and unequivocally condemns all acts of terrorism and emphasizes the importance of preventing and fighting radicalization, violent extremism and recruitment. It actively participates in the struggle against terrorism, notably within the framework of the Global Coalition against Da'esh. We welcome the military successes achieved in Iraq over the past year.

We all know that promoting peace and security goes hand in hand with promoting development. The two dimensions complement and strengthen each other. For that reason, diplomatic mediation efforts and peace operations in conflict zones also require humanitarian support, development cooperation and institutional capacity-building for affected populations and States.

One of the clearest priorities of Portuguese foreign policy is participation in peacekeeping operations and institution-building within the framework of the United Nations. As a European and Atlantic country with deep historical and cultural links to Africa, Portugal pays particular attention to partnerships between the two continents.

The first Summit between Europe and Africa took place in 2000, under the Portuguese presidency of the European Union. The fifth European Union-African Union Summit, to be held in Abidjan in November, will be an excellent opportunity to better define the priorities of the strategic partnership between the European Union and the African continent. The chosen theme — Youth — allows a much-needed integrated approach that addresses issues of education and employment, demographic dynamics and economic growth, gender equality and civic participation.

The African continent has made important progress in recent years. We welcome the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union. There are many signs of hope, both politically and economically. The successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will be another important step in that sense.

However, several disturbing issues still need to be overcome, and Portugal strives to do its part. First, we participate in various peacekeeping and stabilization operations within the framework of the United Nations and the European Union. In that way, we have reinforced our presence, without ever restricting the use of our troops, in the multilateral missions in the Sahel and Central Africa region, namely, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Missions in Mali and in the Central African Republic. Secondly, Portugal cooperates with several African partners in promoting maritime security, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea, to combat piracy and trafficking in people, drugs and weapons and to protect international trade from a strategic point of view for both Africa and Europe.

Peace and sustainable development are built on respect for the rights and dignity of human beings. Portugal defends human rights diplomacy. For us, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are inseparable and interdependent. They apply universally and do not depend on place, history or the religious or civilizational matrix of a society. Upholding those rights is a task for all of us, one which requires dialogue and concerted action. That is the only way human rights will be made universal. Our mandate in the Human Rights Council, which ends this year, was guided by

those principles, and they will continue to guide us in the future.

In 2017, we celebrate 150 years since the abolition of the death penalty in Portugal. We have been pioneers in that cause and will continue to stand for the universal abolition of capital punishment.

The situation of migrants and refugees remains on the agenda. We have a moral obligation to protect and promote the rights of those who, like so many others before them, are forced to leave their homes and families in search of security and a better future. That is the principle that should serve as the basis for the global compact that last year we pledged to prepare and approve.

In that context, I underline the work of the Global Platform for Syrian Students, an initiative of the former President of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio. The Platform guarantees access to higher education for young Syrians who, because of the conflict in their country, have been deprived of that universal right. I invite all countries that have not yet done so to join the Platform and support the Rapid Response Mechanism for Higher Education in Emergencies. The war cannot lead to the loss of yet another generation of Syrian youth, who have the right to education.

For peace and development to be truly sustainable, we must show respect for our common home and future generations. To protect and preserve the planet is to nurture peace and prevent new conflicts that are caused by competition in accessing diminishing resources. In that regard, the Paris Agreement is a milestone in reducing the impacts of climate change. We cannot do without the universal instrument if we are to achieve the objectives of the environmental pillar of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Portugal will comply with the European Union's voluntary commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent by 2030, as compared to 1990 levels, and will contribute to the Green Climate Fund, which is in place to help developing countries adapt to climate change.

The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals are the most powerful statement of our multilateral commitment to the rights of people, the quality of life of populations and the future of our planet. Portugal stands for those Goals, which guide us both in our domestic policy and in our foreign and cooperation efforts. All 17 Goals are very important to us. However, because of our history and the international action on the preservation and enhancement of marine resources, we believe that Goal 14, on oceans, is the one to which our participation can bring greater added value, within the framework of the United Nations.

Oceans — source of life, knowledge and so many resources and exchanges — make up 71 per cent of the surface of our planet and are a top priority in any strategy for sustainable development. The need for action is pressing and wide-ranging, as was evident a week ago in Lisbon in another oceans meeting, this year dedicated to the theme "The Ocean and Human Health". It was promoted by Portugal, and dozens of countries participated.

In 2017, the first United Nations conference dedicated to conservation and sustainable exploitation of the oceans took place. It was a privilege for Portugal to participate in the preparatory process for the conference as co-facilitator, along with Singapore, of the political document that resulted from it: "Our ocean, our future: call for action". I reiterate my country's willingness to host the follow-up conference in 2020.

In our view, the sustainability of oceans requires a strengthening of their governance. For that reason, we believe that the General Assembly should formally decide on the beginning of negotiations, starting in 2018, of a new legally binding instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

However many the challenges we face today and however serious the risks and threats that afflict us, we are certain to make progress when we have clear goals and know how to establish partnerships to reach them. Multilateralism is the only framework for the defence of the common good of humankind and the collective promotion of peace, security and development. In no way does multilateralism diminish the sovereignty of nations or the capacity for decisions of peoples and institutions. The fraternal cooperation promoted by multilateralism contributes to our strengths with the strengths of those who follow the same path and direction.

We know the way and direction to take. Our way is that of the United Nations and our direction is the agenda of the United Nations. Diplomacy for peace, diplomacy for human rights, the climate agenda, the 2030 Agenda — my country is part of and contributes

to all of them for the sake of humanity, which is our common condition.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Portugal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. António Luís Santos da Costa, Prime Minister of the Republic of Portugal, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mrs. Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Mrs. Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Mrs. May (United Kingdom): I would like to begin by expressing my sincere condolences to the Government and the people of Mexico following the devastating earthquake. I also want to reiterate my sympathies to those affected by the recent hurricanes in the Caribbean. Our thoughts are with them all at this time.

As we meet at the General Assembly, we face challenges that go right to the heart of who we are as nations — challenges that test our values, our vision and our resolve to defend the rules and standards that underpin the security and prosperity of our fellow citizens. As I argued in my speech here last year (see A/71/PV.8), many of those challenges do not recognize or respect geographical boundaries.

I think, of course, of the terrorism that has struck so many of our countries — including my own, five times this year —and, fuelling that terrorist threat, of the increasing numbers being drawn to extremist ideologies, not only in places riven by conflict and instability but many online in their homes, thousands of miles away from those conflicts. I think of climate change, which is depleting and degrading the planet we leave to our children. And I think of the vast challenges that come from the mass displacement of people. Many are refugees fleeing conflict and persecution. Others are economic migrants prepared to risk everything on perilous sea crossings in the desperate search for a better life for themselves and their children.

Through that migration we also see the challenges of economic inequality, between countries and within them. That inequality, together with weaknesses in the global trading system, threatens to undermine support for the forces of liberalism and free trade that have done so much to propel global growth, and it is pushing some countries towards protectionism in the belief that that best defends the interests of their own people.

As the global system struggles to adapt, we are confronted by States deliberately flouting, for their own gain, the rules and standards that have secured our collective prosperity and security — the unforgivable use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime against its own people and, perhaps foremost in our minds today, the outrageous proliferation of nuclear weapons by North Korea and a threat to use them.

I believe that the only way for us to respond to that vast array of challenges is to come together and defend the international order that we have worked so hard to create and the values by which we stand. For it is the fundamental values that we share, values of fairness, justice and human rights, that have created the common cause among nations to act together in our shared interests and form the multilateral system. It is that rules-based system that we have developed — including the institutions, the international frameworks of free and fair trade, agreements such as the Paris Climate Agreement, and laws and conventions like the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons — that enables a global cooperation through which we can protect those values.

Indeed, the defining purposes set out in the Charter of the United Nations are to maintain international peace and security, to develop friendly relations among nations, to achieve international cooperation in solving the problems of an economic, social, cultural and humanitarian character, and to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of those common ends. I do not see those as vaunted ideals to be held to their own sake. Those values and the rules they imbue are central to our national interest, to our security and prosperity. The international system, with the United Nations at its heart, is the amplifying force that enables countries to cooperate and live up to those

standards in word, spirit and deed, to our collective and individual benefit.

If the system we have created is found no longer to be capable of meeting the challenges of our time, then there will be a crisis of faith in multilateralism and global cooperation that will damage the interests of all our peoples. Those of us who hold true to our shared values, who hold true to that desire to defend the rules and high standards that have shaped and protected the world we live in, need to strive harder than ever to show that institutions like the United Nations can work for the countries that formed them and for the people who we represent.

That means reforming the United Nations and the wider international system so it can prove its worth in helping us to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. It also means ensuring that those who flout the rules and spirit of our international system are held to account, that nations honour their responsibilities and play their part in upholding and renewing a rules-based international order that can deliver prosperity and security for us all.

First, we must insure that our multilateral institutions can deliver the aspirations on which they were founded. Think of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees looking after those who have been driven out of their homes; the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons striving for a world free of chemical weapons; the United Nations Children's Fund helping children in danger. Those are all vital missions where the United Nations surely has a unique role to play. That is why the United Kingdom has over 70 years been such a pioneering supporter of those organizations, and more.

But we should also acknowledge that throughout its history the United Nations has suffered from a seemingly unbridgeable gap between the nobility of its purposes and the effectiveness of its delivery. When the need for multilateral action has never been greater, the shortcomings of the United Nations and its institutions risk undermining the confidence of States as Members and donors. Even more important, they risk the confidence and faith of those who rely on the Blue Helmets, who rely on that sign I stand in front of today to come to their aid in the darkest of hours.

We must begin by supporting the ambitious reform agenda that Secretary-General Guterres is now leading to create a more agile, transparent and joined-up Organization. Much of the work will be practical and unglamorous. It will require the United Nations to deliver better cooperation on the ground between agencies, remove competition for funding and improve gender equality. But it will also require real leadership to confront damaging issues that have beset the United Nations. I therefore welcome the Secretary-General's new circle of leadership on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations, and I am pleased to be part of that initiative.

We, the nations of the United Nations, need to give the Secretary-General our backing for those reforms. As an outward-looking, global Britain and the second-biggest funder of the United Nations, the United Kingdom will remain committed to spending 0.7 per cent of gross national income on development and humanitarian support. We will use our military to support peacekeeping, and our diplomats will continue to work to tackle conflict and to support peacebuilding. In turn, the United Nations and its agencies must win our trust by proving to us and the people we represent that they can deliver. That is why we will remain generous in our funding but will set aside 30 per cent to be paid only to those parts of the United Nations that achieve sufficient results.

But this is about more than technical reforms, important as they are. It is also about reforms that enable the United Nations to truly respond to the global challenges of the twenty-first century. At last year's General Assembly we undertook to do far more to resolve the challenges of refugee and migration flows. We agreed to develop global compacts to address the causes and the consequences of the mass movements of people we see today. That was an important step to elevate significantly our global response and enable us collectively to tackle this challenge of our times.

In the year ahead, as well as agreeing the principles of those compacts, we must ensure they can be applied in practice. We must do more to identify, protect and support refugees and those hosting them near conflicts. On migration, our starting point must be that it can benefit both countries and migrants themselves, but only when it is safe, orderly, well managed and legal. If we do not manage that effectively, we will fail both our own citizens and those taking those dangerous journeys, and we will push more people into the curse of modern slavery at the hands of the human traffickers and organized criminal groups that drive that inhuman industry.

But the steps we are agreeing through these compacts alone will not be enough. For if people cannot find jobs, opportunity and hope for themselves and their families where they live, they will continue to look elsewhere. As the United Nations and as Members, we must work harder to combine the efforts of our development programmes with the private sector and the international financial institutions to support the creation of jobs and livelihoods that will address not just the consequences but the causes of this great challenge of our time. The truth is that, despite our best efforts, we are not succeeding. We must do more.

The same is true with terrorism, where again, the challenges we face today are vastly different from those of previous eras. When terrorists struck London and Manchester this year the world saw our cities come together in defiance. Our Parliament carries on. Ariana Grande came back to Manchester and sang again. London Bridge is bustling with people. Our communities came together at the Finsbury Park mosque in North London, and Londoners got back on the Tube. The terrorists did not win, for we will never let anyone destroy our way of life.

But defiance alone is not enough. As leaders, we have all visited too many hospitals and seen too many innocent people murdered in our countries. In the past decade, hundreds of thousands have been killed by terrorists across the world. That is a truly global tragedy that is increasingly touching the lives of us all. This year is the tenth anniversary of the death of the woman who introduced me to my husband and who was known well to many of us in the United Nations. Benazir Bhutto was brutally murdered by people who actively rejected the values that all of us here in the United Nations stand for, in a country that has suffered more than most at the hands of terrorists. She was murdered for standing up for democracy, murdered for espousing tolerance and murdered for being a woman.

When I think of the hundreds of thousands of victims of terrorism in countries across the world, I think of their friends, their families, their communities, devastated by that evil, and I say, enough is enough. Of course, we must continue to take the fight to these terrorist groups on the battlefield. The United Kingdom will remain at the forefront of that effort, while also helping to build the capabilities of our alliances and our partners to better take on this challenge.

We must also step up our efforts as never before to tackle the terrorist use of the Internet, for as the threat from terrorists evolves, so must our cooperation. That is why today, for the first time in the United Nations, Governments and industry through the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism will be coming together to do just that. Tech companies have made significant progress on that issue, but we need to go further and faster to reduce the time it takes to remove terrorist content online and to increase significantly their efforts to stop it being uploaded in the first place. That is a major step in reclaiming the Internet from those who would use it to do us harm.

But ultimately it is not just the terrorists themselves who we need to defeat, it is the extremist ideologies that fuel them. It is the ideologies that preach hatred, sow division and undermine our common humanity. We must be far more robust in identifying those ideologies and defeating them across all parts of our societies. As I said in the aftermath of the attack on London Bridge this summer, we have to face the fact that this will require some difficult conversations. We all need to come together, to take on that extremism that lives among us and to nurture the common values that must ultimately win out. They are the values of the United Nations.

And yet, despite our best efforts, we as nations and as a United Nations have not found the ways or the means to truly take on that threat. That is why today, as I talk about United Nations reform, I ask the Secretary-General to make the fight against terrorists and the ideologies that drive them a core part of his agenda, at the heart of our development, peacebuilding and conflict-prevention work. To give that effort the prominence it surely requires, I am calling on the Secretary-General to make that a theme of next year's General Assembly and use it to harness the efforts of Governments, the private sector and civil society so that we can truly strike the generational blow against that vile evil in our world.

As we do so, we must clearly strike the balance between protecting our people and protecting their freedoms. We must always guard against those who would use the fight against terrorism as a cover for oppression and the violation of human rights. As we look at the situation in northern Burma, I call on the Burmese authorities to put an end to the violence, allow humanitarian access and fully implement the

recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

By reforming our multinational institutions, we can strengthen their ability to deliver for the people we serve, protect the vulnerable and fight injustice. We can enable multilateralism to multiply the effect of our individual commitments through its convening power and spending power, through the economies of scale it can bring, the standards it can set, the moral leadership it can harness and the legitimacy it can confer. But multilateralism can only reflect the values that individual States project and can only multiply the commitments that they are prepared to make. It is strong nations that form strong institutions and that provide the basis of the international partnerships and cooperation that brings stability to our world.

It falls to us all to decide whether we will honour the responsibilities that we have to one another. I have talked about the role of the United Nations in stepping up on counter-terrorism. But that is an area that we as States have critical responsibilities that the United Nations cannot itself address alone, for it is inescapable that the terrorism, conflict and instability that we see across the world are in many cases driven by the actions of States acting through proxies.

When countries back groups like Hizbullah to increase instability and conflict across the Middle East, support so-called separatists in Ukraine to create instability on Europe's eastern borders, or give tacit support to criminal groups launching cyberattacks against our countries and institutions, they call into question the very rules and the international system that protect us. That is why, both globally but also in our own continent of Europe, the United Kingdom will remain steadfast in our commitment and responsibility to ensure the security and stability of our friends and allies as we have done for generations.

Just as it the responsibility of nations not to seek to advance their interests through terrorist or proxy groups, so it is also the responsibility of each of us to act together in the face of the most egregious violations of our common rules and standards. Clearly, responsibility for the chaos and tragedy that we see in Syria lies firmly at the door of Al-Assad. He and his backers have continually frustrated the efforts of the United Nations to act as the broker of peace through the Geneva process. As responsible States, we must not abandon our support for the United Nations attempts to secure peace and stability in Syria. Indeed, we must continue to call on all those with influence on the regime to bring them to the table.

But in recent weeks, the United Nations has also confirmed what we all knew, namely, that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons on its own people. In the face of that fact, we have a responsibility to stand up, to hold the Syrian regime to account. That responsibility sits with us all, but a particular, special responsibility lies on the shoulders of the permanent members of the Security Council. As one of those five members, the United Kingdom takes our special responsibility seriously.

I am proud that we have used the full weight of our diplomacy to ensure that we have not had to exercise our veto in a generation. We seek to foster international cooperation, not frustrate it. But others have not done so. One country in particular has used its veto as many times in the past five years as in the whole of the second half of the Cold War. In doing so they have prevented action against a despicable regime that has murdered its own people with chemical weapons. As a result, in Syria, the United Nations has been blocked. That has undermined the values that we hold dear and the international rules-based system that is the basis of security and prosperity around the world.

Now we face an even more immediate, global danger in the activities of Kim Jong Un and his regime in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Time after time, he has shown contempt for the international community of law-abiding States, contempt for his neighbours and contempt for the institutions and rules that have preserved peace and security. On that challenge, the United Nations in recent weeks has shown it can step up to the task, with last Monday's Security Council resolution creating the biggest sanctions package of the twenty-first century. We have seen regional and global Powers coming together and, as in the founding Charter, putting aside limited self-interests to show leadership on behalf of the wider world.

But despite those efforts, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to defy and provoke the international community and threaten its neighbours. Unless all Security Council members continue to live up to the special responsibilities that are placed upon us and, in seeking to resolve that crisis, to be prepared to

take on necessary measures to tackle that threat, we will not be able to bring stability to the Korean peninsula.

As the world looks on, I am calling for further steps and for nations with that special responsibility to work together and exert the pressure we know is necessary to force Kim Jong Un to change his ways. Let us not fail this time. Let our message to North Korea be clear: our determination to uphold those rules is stronger by far than their determination to undermine them.

Throughout the history of the United Nations, countries have shown time and time again that by being true to our values, rules and standards, it is possible to come together and to deliver in ways that have the most extraordinary impact on the lives of the people we serve. I believe we can do so again. We must do so again, and we will do so again.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Paolo Gentiloni Silveri, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy.

Mr. Paolo Gentiloni Silveri, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Paolo Gentiloni Silveri, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Gentiloni Silveri (Italy) (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by the delegation*): I cannot begin my statement without sparing a thought for a friendly country, Mexico, struck by a grave natural disaster. We express our solidarity with the families of the victims and our encouragement to the relief workers.

The seventy-second session of the General Assembly is taking place in a complex and constantly moving global context. The socioeconomic effects of globalization, which can create hardship and inequalities, also compound the persistence of major instability in the international geopolitical framework. The world seems more and more unpredictable, especially when it must address extraordinary challenges.

The international community must find a way to overcome those obstacles and look to the future with confidence. There is hope to be found in the signs of optimism that accompany the recovery of our economies. It is up to us to navigate this road to development with responsibility and courage. We must do so first through better governance of global processes to assure robust and inclusive economic growth aimed primarily at reducing inequalities. Italy is convinced that building democratic, pluralistic and inclusive societies that are open to diversity represents not only an ethical imperative but also the best guarantee of peace and stability. This is a fundamental part of a broader commitment to promoting and guaranteeing effective protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of each individual.

The shared journey of hopes and gains undertaken by the European Union — which for Italy represents the first natural dimension of multilateralism — teaches us that we must have the courage to react to the challenges we face daily. In the past two years the European Union has been forced, perhaps for the first time, to abandon its "climate-controlled" environment — perhaps with difficulty — in order to tackle some of the greatest challenges to have emerged since the post-war period. It has not been easy, nor has it been the beginning of the end, which many had feared, but rather an opportunity for a powerful collective reminder of the need to remain united within the European project.

Today I affirm with profound conviction that a new European impetus exists, which Italy not only shares but actively promotes. There is a will to proceed as one to bring the European project closer to the needs of citizens, the challenges of economic growth, security, and migration. It is a project that strengthens the greatly needed global role of the Union in the world, inspired by multilateralism, free exchange and respect for rule of law.

In short, this story concerns us all, because a European Union that can once again give the whole world an example of solidarity, progress, prosperity and effectiveness is a contribution to the progress and development of the whole world. For Italy,

the development of social, economic and political inclusiveness, extended also to the labour market, as well as fighting poverty and marginalization, means contributing to a more effective management of the challenge of migration. We must respond with compassion, intelligence and vision to the permanent reality of the vast human movements of our time.

For years, Italy has been engaged in operations to rescue and receive migrants. We have saved and continue to save hundreds of thousands of persons who risked drowning in the Mediterranean, true to our ethical and moral imperatives and to the international obligations we have freely undersigned. We are proud of this, but to consolidate our action we need a general, global response to the migration phenomenon. It cannot rely solely upon the generosity of some territories, in the knowledge that there are nations in the world that are struck by migratory flows on an even larger and more serious scale than Italy.

To continue to affirm and embody the principle of shared and proportionate responsibility, Italy is participating actively in the negotiations that will lead to the adoption of global compacts in the United Nations framework. Our proposal to jointly address the migration phenomenon on a global level is based on three main pillars: investing in support of the countries of origin and transit, protecting the most vulnerable refugees and migrants, and valuing the many positive aspects and opportunities created by migration.

Italy is already the promoter of a true partnership with the African countries. As I have already had occasion to express and repeat today with conviction, the future of Europe is in Africa. It is by investing in Africa that we can address the deep causes of migration, first and foremost economic and demographic inequalities.

We are working with the International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to provide assistance to migrants with respect for their human rights, assure the protection of refugees fleeing from wars and persecution and offer favourable conditions and incentives for their voluntary repatriation. Reducing the power of human traffickers is the only way to create progress for legal migration, which is also to the benefit of our countries and does not jeopardize the lives of migrants. To protect those who are weakest is to protect our values. Saving the lives of children allows us to save our societies, our honour and our future.

For Italy, by virtue of our geography and history, our emphasis on responsible and solidary management of the movement of persons is coupled with an emphasis on the security, stability, sustainable development and growth of the Mediterranean and of the African continent as a whole. It is all included in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. We know that the ever-increasing apparent loss of territory for Da'esh in Iraq and Syria has demonstrated the effectiveness of our work but we also know that victory on the ground is not enough. The fanaticism and ideology of Da'esh and of Jihad continue to claim victims and sow terror in our cities and in half of the cities around the world.

Italy is an active partner in the Global Coalition against Da'esh and is engaged in various activities, starting with the presence of its soldiers in Iraq and the second-largest contingent of the Coalition, after the American contingent. Nonetheless, it is because we are engaged with our military forces that we recall that the fight against terrorism requires a multidimensional force. I would mention initiatives such as countering the use of the Internet and social media by terrorists — which we will address here at the United Nations — and the financing of terrorist groups. I would also point to the investments that we must make to promote culture and inclusiveness in our regions and in the neighbourhoods of our cities.

We have devoted great energy in the Security Council, the General Assembly and as the Chair of the Group of Seven (G-7) to upgrade our capacity to respond to the new threats posed by terrorist groups, which are ever-evolving. Libya is the key to restoring to the central Mediterranean its historic role as a driver of civilization, and to countering the risks and threats. As we stated earlier today, its stabilization is a priority objective that must reject every unrealistic hypothesis of a military solution or division of the country.

Italy is a leader in that commitment, and we welcome the fact that the United Nations has returned to action as a leader in Libya at the political level and at the level of providing assistance to refugees and migrants. We have an opportunity to restart the political process and prepare for upcoming elections. We have that opportunity today. It is in our hands and in the hands of the United Nations.

Syria continues to be a source of concern and suffering. Let us not forget that. After six years of unspeakable violence, millions of refugees and hundreds

of thousands of deaths, we welcome the recent efforts to promote local truces in the de-escalation zones. Let us also remember that the only road to a lasting solution to the Syrian conflict is a realistic and credible political process.

There can be no stability, peace or reconstruction, or lasting victory over terrorism, or conditions for the voluntary return of refugees in complete security without an inclusive political transition that brings together the various components of Syrian society. That is why I would like to reaffirm today at the General Assembly our full support for the role of the United Nations and of Special Envoy De Mistura, and, at the same time, urge the main regional and international stakeholders to support the road map outlined in Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). Finally, ultimately, there could be no true peace without justice. That means ascertaining who was responsible for committing atrocity crimes over the years, which began with the use of chemical weapons.

Dialogue and reconciliation are also indispensable instruments for lasting peace on the African continent. Italy has intensified and systematized just actions for the Sahel region, in particular for the Niger, Chad and Mali, which are working with immense difficulty to fight terrorist and criminal organizations and the illegal trafficking activities linked to them, starting with the heinous trafficking in persons. In that context, we are convinced that the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5) initiative is essential and we welcomed the decision of the G-5 Sahel countries to launch, with the support of the African Union, a joint force. Italy continues to assure maximum support for the Horn of Africa — the key to stability for the entire region and to resolving a complex crisis aggravated by climate change, which has led to a devastating drought.

Initiatives in Somalia are moving in the right direction. Italy will continue to support them, given our ancient links to that country.

I would be remiss if I did not mention our deep concern about the very serious situation in Venezuela. It is a situation that has turned a rich and prosperous country into a land of crises and suffering. Italy reiterates its call for an immediate and good-faith dialogue, which cannot disregard the four conditions on the table, namely, authorization to send international assistance, a clearly established electoral calendar, the restoration of the Parliament's powers and the release of all political prisoners.

Finally, we look upon the situation on the Korean peninsula with great anguish and distress, in the face of repeated violations of pertinent Security Council resolutions. It is fundamental for the international community to remain unified and determined in its response and it is in that spirit that, as president of the G-7, Italy promoted a firm group declaration. It is crucial to ensure the full implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions. Every now and then, someone wonders about the usefulness of the United Nations and about the many things happening in the world, but the resolutions that we have unanimously adopted in recent weeks as instruments to exert pressure on the dictator of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are a positive result for the United Nations. They demonstrate that we are ready to cooperate with our partners to continue to put the much needed diplomatic and economic pressure on the regime.

With regard to the Iranian nuclear issue, we believe that the international community should ensure that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action remains a positive factor in the global efforts to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, we are convinced of the importance of the full and comprehensive implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015).

Autocratic regimes, terrorism and international environmental crises pose a grave threat to the planet. But we, the United Nations, cannot and will not give up this fight. The Secretary-General has made prevention one of his highest priorities, and Italy supports him in that commitment. We need to prevent conflict and natural disasters and the humanitarian and migration crises that follow, which, in turn, cause further instability. Prevention means everything except building barriers. It means instead achieving inclusive and sustainable development and addressing crises with multilateral efforts. We cannot face those threats alone. The response must be a joint response. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development outlines with clear-sighted ambition a shared path forward. Together, we have written the prescription — now we must follow through.

Climate change calls for the same dedicated effort. Secretary-General Guterres pointed that out a few days ago when he said that, if we do not address climate

change now, we will ruin many of our grandchildren's opportunities for a positive and dignified life. We are facing an emergency, the social consequences of which do not need to projected onto the future. They are already tragically apparent. We need only think of the more than 200 million displaced persons who, from 2008 to 2015, were forced to leave their homes due to the devastating effects of climate phenomena.

The crises and the challenges of our time can be overcome, and those of the future can be prevented. It depends on us, the United Nations. We need a United Nations that is more effective in enacting the inspirational principles that continue to be valid after so many years. We count, too, on the leadership of the Secretary-General. We fully support his reform plans, including his commitment to empowering women and girls and the achievement of gender equality as a tool for bolstering the efficiency of the Organization.

That revitalization also obviously includes the reform of the Security Council to render it more democratic, effective and representative of the entire membership of the United Nations — because, just as the membership has evolved and expanded since its establishment, the same must occur in the primary organ that is its centre of responsibility.

The current global scenario calls upon us to respond to many challenges that demonstrate that history did not end a quarter of a century ago, as some had believed. We are called upon to constantly renew our endorsement of the values of peace, human rights, democracy and freedom. In other more difficult times of our history, we have seen those values retreat, but we know that even in the most difficult times, democracy can renew itself and grow and, in the end, can prevail.

The meeting rose at 3.25 p.m.

United Nations A/72/PV.9

General Assembly

Official Records

Seventy-second session

9th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 20 September 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Address by Mr. Lenin Moreno Garcés, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador.

Mr. Lenin Moreno Garcés, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Lenin Moreno Garcés, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Moreno Garcés (*spoke in Spanish*): As I speak from this rostrum today, I can affirm that much progress has been made to achieve inclusion and accessibility; however, as a society we still have much that remains to be done for the world's 1 billion people living with disabilities. I am an optimist. We are entirely capable of finding solutions; it is a matter of political will. That is why I am grateful for the accommodations that have been made to enable me to address the General Assembly today.

I congratulate the President, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for proposing the topic for the general debate, namely,"Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". Those are truly today's imperatives. Without a doubt, a responsible Government must take care of its citizens so that all of them may have a decent life on a sustainable planet where every day we work towards achieving peace.

Our Government philosophy agrees that we must care for our citizens throughout their lives, from the moment of conception to when God decides to close our eyes. We must ensure a good life and a good death. That is why we have organized the Government's work around a plan that we have called "A Whole Life". A responsible country and Government must care for, inspire, encourage, support and be good to its citizens throughout their entire lives under the principle of co-responsibility.

Taking care of citizens begins with prenatal services. After birth, we need to provide medical care for the child, appropriate nutrition, vaccinations, neonatal screening and early intervention. Then comes the stage when we must inspire the new human being and foster their love for science, knowledge, art and sports to shape their will and mind, thereby awakening their consciousness and planting the seeds of the values within them that will serve as the basis for their adult life. In the next stage of life, it is crucial for us to propel our young people forward with an education — a high quality higher education — facilitating in that way the fulfilment of their endeavours, projects and dreams. Beyond that stage, we must provide support to individuals with a view to ensuring the well-being of their families — the right to social security, housing,

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employment, recreation and a safe and healthy environment. At the end comes the stage of gratitude when we give back to the people who have served their societies and families — the care and services that we provide to our senior citizens.

Within that vision of ensuring the rights of each individual throughout their entire life, there persists an urgent need to eradicate all forms of violence. Today all of humankind has a moral and ethical duty — we must prohibit the abuse and killing of thousands of women and girls. There can be no more femicides, not even one. Our "A Whole Life" plan is, in sum, how we in Ecuador have interpreted our commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. We unquestionably inherited the notion from our indigenous peoples that the world must be focused on the human being and their relationship to nature, in which the beginning and the end is to meet the needs of all and make possible a life with dignity. My indigenous brothers and sisters taught me that we were born to be happy, and it is upon that premise that we must govern, live, manage and act.

However, we must also recognize that we are experiencing a difficult and painful time as human beings. We are facing many crises. We see a potential nuclear conflict, greater levels of inequality and poverty and a planet that must fight the devastating effects of climate change. If we continue along such a path, there is no doubt that we are moving towards destruction. Clearly that is evidence of the fact that we, the human race, are failing. We must commit to achieving peace. Consistent with that need, today Ecuador is acceding to the Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons. We call on all countries to accede to that historic international instrument.

We know that the military industry is a big business, which is why arms traffickers, and not arms producers, are prosecuted and convicted. What ethics are at play here? How is it possible that resources that could be devoted to financing the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals are wasted on the absurdity of war?

We firmly believe that peace and development are achieved through dialogue; but if we continue with wars and blockades against countries and peoples, such as the blockade against our brother country Cuba, we will never be able to achieve true liberty and democracy. We therefore insist that the sovereignty of States and non-intervention must be respected. We call for dialogue as a mechanism to resolve differences around the globe, with full respect for international law.

Military intervention is not the answer, as it only brings with it suffering, pain and death. We therefore resolutely support the peace talks that the Government of Colombia is holding in our country with the National Liberation Army. We welcome the agreement reached in Quito, which was announced a few days ago, for a bilateral temporary ceasefire in Columbia. Step-by-step we are nearing the goal of having the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States become a region of peace.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my statement, we have before us another major challenge — the alarming inequality in the world. It is unacceptable for eight people in the world to possess the same wealth as one half of humankind's poorest. Such injustice goes against the rights to development and human dignity. A way to immediately confront inequality would be to institute fair tax measures. We must fight tax evasion and avoidance: those hidden resources are vital for the development of our countries.

Furthermore, the use of tax shelters has served to hide corruption within both the public and the private sectors. If we truly want to fight corruption, we must encourage a culture of transparency. In our country, by popular agreement, the people of Ecuador decided that no public servant can have resources or goods in tax havens. As Chair of the Group of 77 and China, Ecuador has promoted a global agenda for fair tax actions. We reiterate the need to create an intergovernmental body on tax cooperation at the United Nations. Another mechanism for promoting transparency would be a binding instrument on transnational corporations and human rights. We appreciate the support of all countries that share our views on such an initiative.

Looking at the devastation caused by climatic phenomena in recent weeks, I would be remiss if I did not express my solidarity with the peoples affected and turn to address one of the greatest challenges that humankind faces, that is, the responsibility to combat climate change. We must take care of our common home and ensure the survival of the planet. The unlimited exploitation of the environment has led us to live with the consequences of climate change. We, the developing countries, are those that pay the highest costs. Countries have common but differentiated responsibilities. Those who pollute the most must take greater responsibility.

As the Assembly knows, Ecuador is one of the eight Amazonian countries. Having been born and raised in the Ecuadorian Amazon, I have a duty to promote the protection of the largest hydrographic basin in the world. In the dialogue convened by the Secretary-General, I presented the Amazon initiative to stop deforestation and combat climate change. We advocate compliance with all international agreements for the protection of nature, including the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans. We encourage bioknowledge and the bioeconomy. We must protect and make the most of the knowledge of the guardians of nature, in particular indigenous peoples, communities and nations.

I would like to refer to another issue of enormous importance for today's world, namely, the migration crisis. Ecuador supports the principle of universal citizenship and free mobility, because we are increasingly interconnected, and the right to free mobility cannot be applied only to capital and goods. Human mobility enriches peoples and contributes to combating all forms of discrimination and xenophobia. We strongly support the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which is being discussed here in the Assembly. Closing borders is not the solution. It has never been the solution in the history of humankind.

When I formed my Government, I called for major national dialogue, without excluding anyone, in order to reach agreements that would allow us to build a more humane, just and democratic society. Dialogue is the only tool for building societies of peace. That means societies with jobs, high-quality education, access to health care as a right, decent housing and access to basic services. Through dialogue, democracy is built, which is both a means of moving forward and our final goal.

Democracy is strengthened by generating and promoting spaces for young people to participate in politics. We have an obligation to generate new leadership so that they can take our place when the time comes. We must maintain the defence of fundamental liberties, including those of expression and worship. We must promote a new international order based on peace, respect for differences, equality and solidarity.

We do not want merely compassionate societies, but rather societies that feature solidarity. That is why we need fundamental love for others, honesty and a sense of community. Faced with the failure of a development model based on accumulation, inequality and war, we can, and must, foster a new society based on the construction of the common good. All countries can achieve development with equity, if we have a fair international system and if we commit ourselves to the eradication of poverty and inequality.

Our challenges are great, but I am convinced that we are capable of overcoming them. My deep optimism lies in the confidence that dialogue, political decision-making and collective action will enable us to build a more humane and more just world in which we can live with dignity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Lenín Moreno Garcés, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Ms. Gabriela Michetti Illia, Vice-President of the Argentine Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Argentine Republic.

Ms. Gabriela Michetti Illia, Vice-President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Gabriela Michetti Illia, Vice-President of the Argentine Republic, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Ms. Michetti Illia (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am very honoured and very happy to be here today representing my country and my Government.

As an Argentine and a Latin American, I cannot begin my statement without first expressing my solidarity and the solidarity of Argentina with those afflicted by the tragic earthquake in Mexico, which adds to the devastation caused by successive hurricanes in the Caribbean. The environment and the forces of nature are speaking to us and presenting us with challenges.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election and on his renewed commitment to the task of focusing our responsibilities as

Governments on people. I believe that that is our most important mission. If the international community is striving for peace, dialogue and understanding, and if we working against poverty, violence and intolerance, Argentina will always be there to offer its support.

The leaders of the world have agreed on a plan of action in favour of people and the planet, namely, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which stipulates that the eradication of poverty in all its forms is the greatest challenge facing the world in its efforts to achieve sustainable development. In keeping with that global aspiration, our Government has established as one of the central axes of its programme the goal of moving decisively towards zero poverty. As a sign of that commitment at the international level, Argentina presented its first voluntary national review of its implementation of the 2030 Agenda in July.

We in Argentina are working to create a country where there is equal opportunity for all. That is why we are also focusing on the creation of jobs and inclusive education. On that note, it is worth mentioning that we will host the fourth Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour in November, where we will tackle issues such as the eradication of forced labour and the promotion of high-quality youth employment. A debate on the future of work goes hand in hand with empowering our young people through high-quality education. We dream of a world where a child's destiny and a young person's future have no limits other than their talent, intelligence, determination, will power and desire to succeed in life.

The promotion and protection of human rights is a State policy of Argentina that has been sustained since we recovered our democracy in 1983. In that vein, we have been working closely with other actors in the regional and international systems for this to be effective. I take this opportunity to reiterate that our country has presented its candidacy for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2019-2020. We count on members' support.

One of Argentina's priorities is to ensure gender equality. We believe that it is important to educate our communities with the aim of eliminating the various forms of hidden violence within our society. For that reason, our Government has committed to implementing programmes that eliminate gender violence and achieve the full empowerment of women and girls, including their political and economic autonomy, within the framework of our first national plan of action for the prevention, assistance and eradication of violence against women.

Our Government has placed special emphasis on the commitments made along with the international community in the framework of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, which was incorporated into our Constitution in 2014. In taking ownership of the spirit of Convention, we have established an agency that focuses on policymaking for disabled persons. The design and implementation of a national plan is essential in terms of participation and working together with disabled persons. As that is an issue that I am personally involved in, I commit to working tirelessly to ensure that the national plan covers all areas referred to in the Convention. From my own perspective as a person with an acquired disability, I wish to express here in the Hall the deep commitment that both President Macri and I have to changing the distorted view held by our culture towards disability.

I would also like to mention the global problem of drugs, which knows no limits or borders. We must cooperate and unite our efforts in order to confront it. The fight against drug trafficking is another of our President's three main policies: we must redouble our international commitments to tackle that scourge. In Argentina we are working in that vein to find a consensus that will enable us to create an international court against organized crime in our region of Latin America.

It is with sadness that I refer to the situation that our sister Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is facing. On 8 August, 12 States of Americas met in Lima to condemn the rupture in the democratic order and the systematic violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the violence, repression, political persecution, the existence of political prisoners and lack of free elections in that country. It pains me to speak such words about a kindred country that is so dear to Argentina, and so, from this rostrum, I call for credible negotiations in good faith, building on a consensus of the parties that is oriented towards the peaceful re-establishment of democracy in Venezuela.

The Government of Argentina once again reiterates its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms. I wish to convey the condolences of our people to the victims of that scourge and their families. We know all too well

what we speak of: my country has directly suffered from terrorism, having been the victim of two major attacks on the city of Buenos Aires, one in 1992 against the Embassy of Israel and then in 1994 against the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA) headquarters.

I wish to reiterate the will of the Republic of Argentina to bring to justice all those who participated in the financing, planning, preparation and execution of those terrorist attacks. The continued investigation of the attack on AMIA calls for the appearance of the accused at a hearing. We do not want another 20 years to pass without justice being served. That is why we call on the international community to support us in our requests for cooperation from the Islamic Republic of Iran, which we have been submitting for some time in order to shed light on this terrorist attack.

For our Government, the new role of developing countries requires the design of an international architecture in finance and trade matters that is oriented towards inclusive, sustainable and balanced economic growth. In that context, Argentina reaffirms its determination to integrate with the world by building bridges with the international community. We have demonstrated that by taking on the responsibilities of hosting the eleventh Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) next December in Buenos Aires and the presidency of the Group of 20 Summit in 2018, among others. We maintain our commitment to achieving positive outcomes at the Ministerial Conference, which should reaffirm the importance of the multilateral trade system, and of the WTO as its keystone. It should also ensure that the benefits of free trade reach all those who seek development, the creation of jobs, the eradication of poverty and the correction of trade distortions, particularly in relation to global agriculture and livestock markets.

The South American Common Market is our main tool for entering the international market. We know that in the twenty-first century we cannot achieve development in our countries individually, just as we cannot do so in our personal lives. Nothing can be done alone, and we are always in need of others to enrich our projects and our lives. We must strengthen our capacities and resources and establish the foundation we need for growth. The current global situation presents challenges to us that confirm Argentina's decision to expand trade and improve our profile as a country for investment. That has led us to establish a Southern Common Market in accordance with focused regionalism to attract investments and to strengthen participation in global value chains, which will have special emphasis and effect on small and medium-sized enterprises, generating more and better jobs. That is why we have strongly encouraged negotiations with the European Union, and those negotiations are entering their final phase. We are also negotiating with the European Free Trade Association, and we will soon be doing the same with Canada and with the Republic of Korea. We have also intensified our links with the Pacific Alliance, with Japan and with New Zealand.

Argentina's international cooperation operates through the Argentine Fund for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, which is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary this year and is a fundamental foreign policy mechanism that makes it possible for us to align ourselves in solidarity and in a horizontal fashion with other States. We need to update our strategies to create links and relationships with other mid-level developed States. As a reflection of our vocation to enter the regional and international arenas, next March Argentina will be the host of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. We hope that that will provide an opportunity for debate and for the building of consensuses that will make it possible for us to achieve a fairer, more equal world.

Argentina reaffirms its commitment to United Nations peacekeeping operations. We will continue to provide our assistance, especially in Haiti and in Colombia.

Argentina promotes its presence on the international stage with the aim of achieving better levels of protection and a sustainable and rational use of our natural resources, and we encourage all projects and all activities that improve the living conditions of the people living on our national territory. Care for the environment is a priority for my Government. Growth cannot take place in a manner that is out of balance with the environment. As Pope Francis warned, the pace of consumption, of waste and of change in the environment has gone beyond the resources of the planet. The environment is a collective good; it is the heritage of all of humankind, and it is everybody's responsibility. Protecting the environment should be a comprehensive part of the development process. It must not be seen in isolation. Argentina is committed to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. It upholds that commitment and will continue upholding it with other

States parties in the preparatory process for the twenty-third Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in order to achieve concrete progress in the implementation of the Convention.

We wish to reiterate our legitimate and inalienable right of sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. Once again, we call upon the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to renew bilateral negotiations, which will make it possible for us to find a peaceful permanent solution that respects the way of life of the island peoples and that is in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Our Government has begun a new phase in our relations with the United Kingdom. We hope that that will contribute to the creation of conditions in which both Governments can sit at the negotiating table with a view to resolving this protracted sovereignty dispute.

Two years ago our Governments met in this Hall to add their voices to a collective commitment, which took the form of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Taking on in a determined manner the targets and goals set by the 2030 Agenda will allow us to build a better world for coming generations. The progress that we have already made bears witness to the fact that focusing on people, as the Secretary-General requests that we do, is the only way to respond to our task.

The phase of history that we are living through is full of challenges and opportunities. I welcome the fact that in every corner of our planet there is a renewed perspective with regard to the vital, distinct contribution that women can and must make, provided that we bring feminine attributes into play. What am I talking about? I am talking about our natural tendency as women to unite in a world where disintegrating forces seem to be gaining strength and prevailing. We have a vocation for long-term vision when everything around us appears to be uncertain. We have the vocation of nourishing, of caring for others, of seeing with empathy, and of putting ourselves in other people's shoes. All of those are indispensable feminine qualities that we must put into play if we want a more equal and more just society.

Those attributes are indeed vital but, as we know, they are not the exclusive domain of women. Neither are we are the only people needed to reach the goals that we have set. It would be extremely counterproductive to sacrifice the contribution of any gender, tradition, religion or culture on the altar of our prejudices. We need everybody. We must all bear the enormous burden of ensuring that this stage of history will bear fruit in the lifetime of each individual. In that way, without excluding anybody who wants to contribute towards that work, we will achieve a global society that is more prosperous and, above all, more just and fair. Our work must be a work of love because justice and the quest for the common good are the expression of love in the public sphere.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Argentine Republic for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Marta Gabriela Michetti Illia, Vice-President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sassou Nguesso (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to express my sincerest condolences to the people and the Government of Mexico in the wake of the earthquake that was so devastating for that country.

On behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, I would like to extend to the President our heartfelt congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I also express our gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, to whom we pay warm tribute for the work accomplished. We also once again wish Secretary-

General Guterres every success in the fulfilment of his mandate.

I note with interest the great significance of the theme of this general debate. Indeed, focusing on people and striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet is a tremendous challenge that calls for a spirit of openness and responsibility on all our parts.

Humankind faces many challenges. Terrorism is spreading its reach daily. No continent is immune to violence perpetrated in the name of extremism and nationalism. The increased tensions on the Korean peninsula could lead to nuclear conflict on an unprecedented scale. The situations in Syria and Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the nuclear threat and the crises in Africa and other parts of the world mean that there is now a pressing moral need for peace, without which nothing constructive or sustainable can be built. That has always been our guiding light.

Whenever circumstances allow, the Congo has always seized every opportunity to uphold the ideals of peace and justice in Africa and across the world. It is in that context that, on 19 October, my country will host the next Summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the seventh High-Level Meeting of the Follow-up Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. The Summit will provide an opportunity to consider ways and means of resolving the various crises that currently afflict that part of our continent.

In addition, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries in the Great Lakes region are confronted with various crises. I refer in particular to the Central African Republic, Burundi and South Sudan. In the case of the Central African Republic, the return to peace is moving forward apace. The Government and the people of the Congo are unwavering in their support for the people of the Central African Republic. The implementation of the Road Map for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, adopted in July under the auspices the African Union, should provide new impetus to the stabilization of that fraternal country.

Moreover, the search for solutions for an effective exit from the crisis in Libya as part of the mandate entrusted by the African Union to the Congo is unquestionably moving in the right direction. The holding of the fourth meeting of the African Union High-level Committee on Libya on 1 September in Brazzaville led to quite heartening progress. All major stakeholders in the Libyan crisis and members of the dialogue committees set up by the Libyans themselves travelled to Brazzaville during or just after the Summit. A final communiqué and road map were adopted at the end of the meeting. The commission for inter-Libyan dialogue has begun its discussions, and they will essentially focus on the amendment of the Libyan Political Agreement adopted in Skhirat on 17 December 2015 and the inter-Libyan conference that is to take place in Addis Ababa in December. From this rostrum, I would like to reiterate my country's resolve to continue working for peace in Libya. That is why I urge the international community to support the efforts of the Congo to strengthen initiatives conducive to a positive outcome for those various crises.

Undoubtedly, poverty will continue to pose a lasting global challenge until we break the cycle of dependence and dramatic contingencies that has been caused by disturbing changes of natural ecosystems. In that respect, the globalizing and interdependent nature of our response is undeniable. Beyond our differences, we must draw on the regulatory capacities of the great Powers, in conjunction with the search for adapted paradigms and more effective solidarity aimed at advancing the developing economies. Our global stability depends upon that.

In that particular context, Africa has been affected by the tragedy of emigration across the Mediterranean Sea. Similarly, the forced displacement of populations towards more hospitable areas, as a result of climate change, gives a measure of the distress of men, women and children — all victims. It is a matter of concern to us all. We must take significant action in a spirit of solidarity and mutual understanding so as to contain those exoduses towards uncertainty and save the lives of thousands of Africans.

As a truly global issue, the climate was the subject of promising discussions regarding its future at the Paris Conference in 2015. It is urgent that the commitments made there be kept. For the collective consciousness of humankind, that is the place to express our compassion and solidarity with the populations that are victim to the harmful consequences of climate change. I refer specifically to the devastating effects of Hurricane Irma in North America and the floods and landslides in Asia and some African countries, particularly in Sierra

Leone. Once again, we must agree that the protection of the environment is a common and imperative obligation.

In that context, my country initiated the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin on the sidelines of the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The memorandum of understanding that was signed last March in Oyo, the Congo, marks the first step in the Fund's creation. That financial instrument aims to ensure a better quality of life for our people and protect the forests of the Congo basin, which is the second-largest green lung in the world after the Amazon. I invite the international community to support the Congo in that initiative aimed at protecting our planet from global warming.

A decent life for all also means allowing our populations to benefit from high-quality health care. The proliferation of counterfeit and sub-standard medicines is an increasingly serious threat to the world, particularly for developing countries. The expansion of that scourge brings to mind various carefully organized forms of trafficking that have helped to finance terrorism. According to the World Health Organization, counterfeit medicines lead to 800,000 deaths a year. Approximately 10 per cent of medicines in circulation worldwide are estimated to be counterfeit. In Africa and the countries of the South in general, that figure may reach 40 per cent, and even 60 per cent in some regions.

In addition to the efforts of the World Health Organization, vigorous action at the level of the General Assembly should be undertaken with a view to defining a comprehensive strategy to combat the peril. Advocacy in that area requires the constant mobilization of all countries, including sustained attention and substantial financial allocations. For our part, my country has engaged in the fight in collaboration with the Brazzaville Foundation for Peace and Conservation.

The Republic of the Congo is experiencing a period that is marked by socioeconomic concern for the drastic decrease in oil prices. Budgetary adjustments are now envisaged, with the support of international financial institutions. In spite of the dismal situation, the Congo continues its resolute march towards the consolidation of its democracy. More than ever, the virtues of constructive dialogue are being brought into play. An institutional framework was implemented after the presidential, legislative, local and senatorial elections. The stakeholders of the nation are exercising their rights in complete freedom.

Transforming the world into a haven of peace and prosperity is possible. We are given proof of that with every passing day. It is up to us to realize that goal, while leaving no one behind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Congo for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Chile.

Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Bachelet Jeria (*spoke in Spanish*): I want to begin by sending a fraternal greeting to the people of Mexico, and especially to the relatives and friends of the victims of the terrible earthquake that struck that fraternal country yesterday. I also convey my sentiments to the victims and all those affected by the hurricanes that in recent weeks and days have caused enormous damage in the region and, in some cases, irreparable losses.

Those most recent catastrophes, caused by hurricanes more frequent and violent than usual — largely due to the warming of the oceans — remind us that we are at a key moment in the history of humankind, a defining moment that will have repercussions on our lives and on the lives of our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. While the challenges we face today are different from those that gave rise to the Organization 72 years ago, they are as relevant and as defining as those faced by the postwar generation.

On the one hand, the notion of development that has prevailed until now has been shaken by the

relentless reality of climate change. We can close our eyes and deny a reality whose devastating effects will become more frequent and intense, or we can assume our responsibility. Beyond reducing carbon dioxide emissions, that implies daring to transform our production models and rethinking the type of growth we wish to promote.

On the other hand, at a time when there is democracy in so many countries as never before, we see a citizenry that has grown impatient with institutions whose legitimacy has been called into question by corruption, inequality and inefficiency with regard to citizens' most urgent demands.

Finally, in an international scenario marked by uncertainty, another definition is required. We either let each State attempt to impose itself and take the greatest advantage of its position, or we work actively for common peace and stability by strengthening the multilateral instruments and cooperation. The fact that we are here today in this Hall, where so many have touted the strength of peaceful and collective work, requires us to look at the risks we face and take on individual and collective tasks, weighing the consequences of inaction.

Today I bring the voice of Chile — a country that has learned from its history, a country that has known pain, but also hope. Beyond its geographical location in the extreme south of the American continent, my country is in fact not far from the world. Quite the contrary, it is fully within it. We therefore know that many of the great local challenges are, and will continue to be, global challenges, and that each global challenge must also find a local response. There is no room for fatalism in the face of those challenges. Today I bring the message of realistic optimism. It is possible to reverse past decisions, overcome inertia and correct our path. That is true for small and large countries, be they in the centre or on the periphery.

The enormous strength of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is precisely that they not only propose a new approach to improving the living conditions of people, they propose that we do it together, based on the strengths of each country. Our commitment to national tasks is bolstered by contact with others. Faced with the choice of whether or not to join the fight against climate change, we have not doubted — simply because there is no room for denialism or selfish postures.

In line with SDG 14, on the oceans, and the Paris Agreement, my country has launched a national action plan for climate change. Among the measures already under way are the green tax on carbon dioxide emissions from fixed sources and the transformation we have made in the energy sector. Since the start of this Administration, non-conventional renewable energy has gone from 6.3 per cent to 17 per cent of our matrix, and our goal is to reach 90 per cent by 2050. That is possible, because we have already started the energy transition.

In addition, we have been active in the Our Oceans initiative. We have created new marine parks and marine-protected areas. Almost half of our exclusive economic zone is protected today, reaching the historic figure of 1,329,090 square kilometres under marine conservation.

While we have made significant progress in that direction, we are aware that we must address another threat to marine ecosystems — plastics. Year after year, 8 million tons of plastic make their way to the ocean, remaining there for hundreds of years and making a huge negative impact. To tackle that problem, we participate in the Clean Seas campaign of the United Nations Environment Programme. Meanwhile, at the local level, we will present a draft bill to ban the use of plastic bags in coastal cities within 12 months. That law will permit citizens to contribute to the protection of the oceans. We will thus be the first country in America to implement that type of law, and we call on other countries to assume that responsibility.

Additionally, it is now 30 years since the adoption of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, which enabled the ozone layer to recover. On this thirtieth anniversary, I would like to announce that my country has just deposited its ratification of the 2016 Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, which aims to prevent 0.5°C of global warming. Chile thereby becomes one of the first countries to ratify that new agreement. But that is not all. With the creation of a network of parks in Patagonia, we have also added 4.5 million hectares of green areas, rich in biodiversity, which will now be protected by the State for public use.

That shows that it is possible to move forward when there is will, when the public and private worlds join forces. Sustainable development is not a desire

impossible to finance. On the contrary, it is the best way for economic activity to be sustained over time.

But as I said at the beginning of my remarks, this is not the only dilemma. We also share pressing challenges in terms of democracy and inclusion. International experience has helped us and alerted us to the need to take charge of improving our democratic institutions, as well as transparency and probity in both politics and business, putting a brake on corruption.

The President took the Chair.

In that connection, we substantially modified the electoral system that we inherited from the dictatorship, making it more proportional and inclusive and guaranteeing a minimum quota of 40 per cent for female candidates. Along with that, we made changes to the regulations that govern the financing of electoral campaigns and political parties so that money does not define the outcome of elections. And we are in the process of a participatory drafting of a new constitution that is more modern and democratic.

But we understand that strengthening our democracy is not enough if we do not respond to the demand for greater individual liberties and rights for people. That is why we have made decisive progress in expanding sexual and reproductive freedoms and rights. Of course, that movement towards higher levels of individual freedom must be accompanied by social policies that promote equality and solidarity and expand people's capacities. That is why education is at the heart of our reforms.

In less than four years, we have implemented important changes to ensure, on the one hand, that people will have the education they need and deserve, regardless of their socioeconomic situation, and, on the other, that Chile can count on professionals and technicians in the most important areas for its development. We have done that by enacting reforms from nursery school to higher education, and we have put public education at the centre of that movement. We are gradually increasing access to free education, first for lower-income families — next year, 60 per cent of our students will be have access to higher education free of charge — and then for the entire population.

That is our way of promoting the idea that there can be no individual progress without collective progress, that there can be no lasting well-being where a few privileged groups become disconnected from the most disadvantaged. That is our way of realizing that well-being must be founded on a common link and universal values in order to become a reality.

Lastly, with regard to the third definition we are called upon to understand, I unreservedly state that Chile maintains an unchanging strategic understanding of peace, democracy, human rights and the rights of migrants, and free trade. For that reason, I cannot help but mention the situation of our brother country Venezuela. Chile, together with 11 countries in the region, has called for credible dialogue between the Government and the opposition. We are prepared to play the role that Venezuelans deem appropriate in order to achieve good results in a peaceful, political and democratic manner.

In the same vein, we are not the only ones to express our concern about the threats to peace in different parts of the world, such as the Middle East and areas of Africa and Eastern Europe, in particular with regard to the insistence on the use of nuclear weapons, which tests the very limits of peaceful coexistence. As we have publicly indicated, we hope that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will stop the nuclear tests, comply with the resolutions of the Security Council, contribute to guaranteeing lasting stability in North-East Asia and agree to resolve the situation through peaceful diplomatic and political channels.

In that context, we actively participated in negotiations for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which we signed this morning. That historic act creates a standard that sets the basis for future negotiations, making it possible to completely eliminate nuclear weapons in a verifiable, irreversible manner.

Along with that, I wish to express our pride and satisfaction at having participated for 13 years, with more than 12,000 men and women, in the troop and police contingents of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. We have renewed our commitment to continuing to participate in cooperation with our specialized police in the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti. Furthermore, as part of our policy on cooperation for development, Haiti has been made a priority partner, like the Caribbean and Central America, in programmes to improve institutions, security, enterprise and professional training.

Along the same lines, I also wish to highlight the participation of Chilean observers in the peace process

in Colombia, who are wrapping up the first special political mission and initiating the transition to the second. Chile also participated in the first stage of the process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, and we are now participating as a garantor in conversations between the Colombian Government and the National Liberation Army.

We do not believe only in the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes, but also in the enormous opportunities opened up by trade. We have worked intensely with our bilateral partners and with the Pacific Alliance to create what we call convergence in diversity. Latin American countries should come together on the basis of that which unites us instead of dwelling on our differences. That is to say, on each and every issue that pertains to international coexistence, we have affirmed, and will continue to reaffirm, our commitment to multilateralism and the existence of rules that guarantee the fair treatment of each country.

Like other middle-income countries, my country faces major short- and medium-term challenges. That is why we value the multidimensional vision for development set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which recognize the differences between countries and gaps in development that are obscured when the only measurement of development is per capita income.

Yet it appears that we are facing a contradiction. Middle-income countries, including many small island developing States in the Caribbean, are being graduated by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development solely for having passed the per-capita income criterion. Where, then, is the multidimensional criterion of the 2030 Agenda?

Faced with that situation, Chile, together with other countries in the region, has spoken out and requested that a serious dialogue be initiated regarding the incorporation of multidimensional criteria in the definition of development. Together with Jamaica, we are launching a new initiative, the Resilient 20, which seeks to create an alliance to promote resilience in countries that are vulnerable to natural disasters, with a focus on middle-income countries but not limited to them.

Faced with the challenges presented by governance of the international community, I reaffirm the value of this Assembly and this Organization. That is why we support the transformations promoted by Secretary-General António Guterres for managing the Secretariat, which will facilitate decision-making in key sectors in both policy and administrative issues as well as promote confidence between Member States and the Organization. We have also supported the readjustments to the process of selecting and appointing the Secretary-General so as to make it more transparent and inclusive of all Member States. The long-awaited reform of the Security Council, to make it more democratically representative and fitting for the realities of the world today, is still pending.

The President took the Chair.

The world is seen differently from the South. While we still see vast sectors of our countries without access to the most basic public services, and when there is still hunger, segregation, precarious work and enormous inequality, there is only one conclusion: we have a long way to go for the agenda of solidarity to overcome the agenda of selfishness and indifference. It is true that some of those challenges are not exclusive to emerging countries — advanced democracies are also experiencing them. But the demands continue to be far more basic in the South. Chile has made major progress. In several areas we have reached standards that near those of developed countries, and we are proud of those gains.

However, there are still many countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia that are facing histories of pain and frustration. We share with them a history of effort and hope that bonds us together in the present and the future. Because we have known scarcity, we know what it is to fight to break free of underdevelopment, as well as the fear of falling back into its grasp. We also know what it is to be a middle-income country with a healthy, solid economy yet with dramatic gaps in equality and opportunity for its inhabitants.

We therefore know at first hand the need to make changes, but also that change must come about through solidarity, which we claim not only for individuals but also for peoples. To share, cooperate and collaborate is the first step in societies caring for themselves, to regard the present and the future with greater certainty. Today it is true that the needs of the global scene are different, but they are urgent and require historic efforts from one and from all. We must cooperate on the level of each country on projects coordinated between nations

and guided by a clear agenda that inspires us all and to which we can all contribute.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Chile for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Raimonds Vējonis, President of the Republic of Latvia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Raimonds Vējonis, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Raimonds Vējonis, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Vējonis: First of all, I would like to express my solidarity to the Mexican people, who are dealing with the aftermath of a devastating earthquake.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Lajčák, on assuming the post of President of the General Assembly at its current session. I am sure you will make our region proud.

The United Nations is, and will be, the central forum for multilateralism and a rules-based global order. This is the place where all nations come together to carry out our shared responsibility to deliver peace and security, advance human rights and sustainable development and cooperate for a better future. As the truly global Organization, the United Nations must be able to effectively respond to the serious global issues that we face: regional conflicts and humanitarian crises, the threat of terrorism, insecurity related to migration, climate change and poverty. Individuals and their need for peace and a decent life are at the centre of all those challenges. We must be able to deliver on those needs as individual nations and as the United Nations.

It is no secret that the Organization has grown too complex and bureaucratic to be able to respond swiftly to today's challenges. Some even question its credibility and relevance. Latvia also wishes to see the United Nations become more effective, more transparent and more flexible so that it can can make a positive, real influence for people on the ground. While the most recent global agreements have shown that effective multilateralism is possible, we must bring the values and goals of the United Nations closer to the people. The United Nations must preserve and, in some instances, regain, the trust of citizens and Member States in its ability to prevent and respond to crises and to promote a rules-based global order.

The new Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, was appointed on a platform of change. Latvia welcomes his appointment and fully supports his vision of a more effective United Nations. The Secretary-General's actions and ideas related to qualitative change and reforms in the United Nations are very encouraging signs. Reform is never an easy task, but with patience, clear goals and the cooperation of the United Nations system and Member States, reform is possible. The Secretary-General has our full support for his endeavours.

All people on the planet need peace. For people to fully realize their potential, a stable and secure environment is essential. In too many places, conflicts seem to have no end. The very basic principles of international law are violated, borders are changed by force and human lives suffer. Far too often, the United Nations has been unable to prevent conflicts, stop atrocities or build peace. Too often, resources are spent managing and responding to crises instead of preventing them.

The Security Council bears a particular responsibility for ensuring peace. Its members, especially the veto-wielding members, should move beyond their domestic interests in the name of genuinely addressing global challenges. People see the failures of the Security Council as failures of the Organization. We cannot expect trust in the United Nations if the Security Council does not deliver. Latvia also reiterates its call for reform of the Security Council, which is long overdue.

From his first day on the job, the Secretary-General has made a strong appeal for peace and the prevention of conflicts. We fully support him in that endeavour. Conflict prevention must be at the core of actions of the United Nations in order to keep situations of concern from spiralling out of control. Saving human lives and upholding human dignity must be our common priority.

Tools for prevention have long been available, including in the Charter of the United Nations, but we need to move from mere commitments to preserve a rules-based global order to actions to restore that order where it has been broken. Latvia will continue to promote democracy, good governance, human rights and the rule of law as key factors for global stability.

Security is truly a global issue today. In particular, Latvia is deeply worried about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. North Korea's actions have increased global insecurity. Latvia strongly condemns all nuclear tests and launches of ballistic missiles conducted by North Korea, as well as its continuous provocative rhetoric. We call on North Korea to return to a credible and meaningful dialogue with the international community and to refrain from any further action that would increase regional tensions. It is a priority to find a peaceful and diplomatic solution to that situation. In the meantime, all States must fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria, which blatantly disregards Syria's obligations as a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, is a deplorable crime that must be fully investigated. The perpetrators must be held accountable. Latvia has constantly called for accountability regarding those attacks, an accountability that is closely linked to the credibility of the whole international system. For that reason, Latvia has supported the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic to assist the investigation and prosecution of serious crimes committed in Syria. We will continue to support the Syrian people and the United Nations-led political process towards a political resolution of that bloody conflict, which has lasted far too long.

Global terrorism is one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. The unwavering efforts of the Global Coalition against Da'esh have degraded the capabilities of Da'esh across all fronts. Latvia welcomes the important victories achieved, including the liberation of Mosul in Iraq. However, our fight is far from over, and we have to think about new strategies and secure new domains as the threat of terrorism becomes more asymmetric and globally dispersed. Besides military efforts, we must continue to disrupt the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, dismantle financing networks and counter online and offline propaganda that sets youth on a path towards radicalization.

We are pleased to see that the Riga Protocol on foreign terrorist fighters — the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism — entered into force in July. We encourage more States to accede to that instrument in order to address the threat at hand, which affects countries of origin and of destination.

International support will be required to help stabilize liberated areas in Syria and Iraq in order to allow refugees and internally displaced persons to return and start rebuilding their lives. Latvia provides training to Iraqi security forces and financial support for stabilization efforts.

Solving existing conflicts is essential for preventing new ones. We must stand firm in upholding the rules-based security order in Europe. The territorial integrity of independent States must be respected by all, including by the Russian Federation. Russia's unprovoked aggression against its neighbours is a serious breach of international security rules. There must be accountability for violations of international law for any aggressor that initiates or sustains such conflicts.

A peaceful resolution of the conflict in Ukraine and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity are priorities for Latvia. Russia's continued aggression in eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol cannot become business as usual. We support diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis under the Normandy format and within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group so as to achieve the full implementation of the Minsk agreements by all the parties involved. International monitors must be granted access to Crimea, and human rights violations against residents of Crimea, including Crimean Tatars, must stop.

The United Nations, along with the relevant regional actors, should remain involved in, and committed to, facilitating the resolution of the protracted conflicts in Nagorno Karabakh, Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Last year (see A/71/PV.12) I stressed that the strengthening of the development and security nexus must become our mission. Our priority must be to achieve peace and a decent life for everyone, including the most

vulnerable among us. We must tackle the root causes preventing us from attaining sustainable development. If conflicts, hardship and poverty continue, migration and the flow of refugees will further increase. The far-reaching impact of climate change on global security cannot simply be disregarded. We must carry on with our joint commitment to tackle climate change so that coming generations can live sustainably on this planet in a sustainable way. Latvia is fully committed to the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Now is the time to put in place the mechanisms of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That needs to be done at all levels — national, regional and global — in true partnership with all stakeholders. We welcome the current review of the United Nations development system to fulfil the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda. Next year Latvia will present a voluntary national review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Our national focus is to put people first, as that will lead to long-lasting development gains. Latvia is ready to share its experience with implementing the 2030 Agenda through development cooperation.

To enjoy peace and development, our societies need space and institutions for free, open and enlightened public debate where truth can be sought, knowledge shared and lies exposed. Such belief is also at the heart of our approach to countering purposeful and malicious propaganda and disinformation emanating from both State and non-State actors. Our answer to that challenge is to reassert the fundamental principles of freedom of speech and press and the independence of the media. Both nationally and internationally, we are committed to supporting the development of independent, professional, transparent and objective media and journalism, and to increasing the resilience of our societies by investing in stronger critical thinking skills, as well as media and information literacy.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that Latvia remains a strong advocate of the multilateral system and believes in an effective and efficient United Nations, guided by the values on which it was founded. It is time for the United Nations to adapt to a changing global environment, focus on priorities and deliver results. The Secretary-General cannot do that alone. We all must work together to ensure that our Organization functions better and is fit for its purpose.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Raimonds Vējonis, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Zuma: I take this opportunity to express South Africa's solidarity with the fraternal Governments and the peoples of the Caribbean following waves of devastating hurricanes that have resulted in loss of life, injuries and serious damage to infrastructure and property. Our thoughts are also with the Government and the people of Mexico in the wake of the earthquake that rocked Mexico City yesterday.

I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I assure you of South Africa's full support in the implementation of your priorities and responsibilities throughout your term. We also commend Mr. Peter Thompson of Fiji for his exceptional leadership during the Assembly's seventy-first session. I warmly congratulate Mr. António Guterres on his appointment as the Secretary-General. We also congratulateMr. Ban Ki-moon on his successsful tenure.

We have chosen an appropriate theme for this debate, given the challenges facing the world today — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". The theme encompasses the three pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, humanitarian affairs and human rights, and socioeconomic and sustainable development.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), two years ago, in order to continue the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals marked a significant shift and historic moment in the life of the United Nations. We all committed ourselves to addressing the challenges of poverty, underdevelopment and inequality. However, a lot more still needs to be done to promote a more equal and just socioeconomic world order so that we can achieve the SDGs.

The current structure of the global economy continues to deepen the divide between the Global North and Global South.While a few enjoy the benefits of globalization, the majority of the peoples of the world still live in abject poverty and hunger, with no hope of ever improving their living conditions. Even within developed countries, the gap between rich and poor remains wide and is of serious concern. We need political will and commitment from global leaders to address the challenges and obstacles posed by the untransformed structure of the global economy, if we hope to achieve the goals and ambitions of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Those unequal and unjust economic power relations manifest themselves sharply in Africa. For example, our continent is endowed with mineral resources, but it still has the highest number of least developed countries. Many developed countries continue to fuel their development from the resources of the African continent.

The continent also continues to lose a significant portion of its resources through illicit financial outflows. Africa loses billions of dollars that it otherwise would utilize to develop the continent and to provide for education, health care, housing and other critical basic needs for the African populations.

Money laundering, tax evasion and tax avoidance, corruption and transfer pricing by multinational companies are some of the biggest challenges to economic growth and stability. They undermine the integrity of the global financial system, efficient tax collection and equitable allocation of resources. We appeal for the cooperation and commitment of every State Member of the United Nations and the international community at large to address that phenomenon. Developed countries in particular have a historical and moral obligation to contribute to achieving a fair global economic environment and to eradicate the scourge of illicit financial flows from the continent.

The United Nations should also play a central role in addressing this problem. We therefore welcome the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 71/213, entitled "Promotion on international cooperation to combat illicit financial flows in order to foster sustainable development". It is a preliminary step towards a global architecture to tackle the scourge and impacts of illicit financial flows.

The issue of global peace and security continues to be one of the pillars of the United Nations agenda. South Africa reaffirms its commitment to cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, particularly the African Union (AU), in matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. We welcome the continued support for the AU's efforts to resolve conflicts on the African continent through promoting African solutions to African problems and challenges. As Africans, we are doing everything possible to reach our goal of silencing the guns by 2020, as set out in our Agenda 2063, a continental blueprint for a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Africa. In that regard, we continue to make significant progress in resolving challenges to peace and security in our continent.

We hope that soon the sister people of Libya will be able to live in peace and harmony in a united and democratic country. In 2011, the African Union called for dialogue to resolve the crisis in Libya. Unfortunately, some of us present here opted for guns and bombs, and today those countries are making little effort to promote stability in Libya. The major focus and preoccupation has become how to deal with the flow of migrants arriving in Europe from our continent and the Middle East, which is a mere symptom. The war in Libya has contributed a great deal to the destabilization of the Sahel region all the way to Central Africa, creating a corridor for illicit arms trafficking and terrorist activities. In fact, had our warning been heeded that the supply of arms to civilians in Libya and the arming of civilians in Syria would cause loss of life, great instability and mayhem, the world would be more peaceful today.

South Africa continues to call for an immediate end to the violence and for a Syrian-led political transition and a negotiated settlement that reflects the will of the Syrian people. In both instances — of Libya

and Syria — we strongly cautioned against seeking to resolve internal challenges of sovereign States by imposing foreign solutions through military means. It is hoped that lessons will be learned from those tragic episodes in order to make the world a more peaceful place.

We continue our call for calm on the Korean peninsula. The situation cannot be allowed to get out of hand. As a country that voluntarily dismantled its nuclear-weapon programme, South Africa is of the firm view that there are no safe hands for weapons of mass destruction. The only viable solution to the problems of nuclear weapons is their total elimination, as expressed in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, recently adopted by the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. It can no longer be acceptable that a few countries maintain arsenals and stockpiles of nuclear weapons as part of their strategic defence and security doctrine, while expecting others to remain at their mercy. We are concerned that any possible accidental detonation would lead to a disaster of epic proportions.

We are making a clarion call to all States Members of the United Nations to sign and ratify the nuclear-weapon-ban treaty in order to rid the world and humankind of these lethal weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, we reaffirm the inalienable right of States to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, as reinforced in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. South Africa is today proud to be the biggest producer of medical isotopes used in the treatment of cancer patients globally. We will continue to harness the peaceful uses of atoms in addressing challenges of socioeconomic development.

As we stand here, the Security Council is paralysed and unable to carry out its Charter responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security. We remain steadfast in our call for the reform of that critical organ of the United Nations. We hope that the Secretary-General, working with the entire membership, can provide some impetus towards fulfilling this long-awaited ideal. Failure to do so will result in the United Nations irreversibly losing its legitimacy.

Mr. Biang (Gabon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We take this opportunity to express our empathy and solidarity with all the victims of the devastating hurricanes, monsoons, floods and droughts as a result of climate change. Those phenomena are proof that climate change is real and that, if we do not act now, future generations will suffer untold consequences. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change is a milestone in the history of efforts to address climate change and all its consequences. We should resist all efforts to unravel and undermine the Paris Agreement. Our efforts should be directed at the mobilization of the resources required for its implementation.

For South Africa, the seventy-second session of the General Assembly coincides with the centenary of Oliver Reginald Tambo, who led our liberation movement, the African National Congress, for three decades in the struggle against apartheid and racism in South Africa. O.R. Tambo travelled all over the continent of Africa and the globe, mobilizing international support for the struggle against racial discrimination and the oppressive apartheid regime. He strongly believed in the role of multilateralism and in the centrality of the United Nations. It was for that reason that he spent a lot of time in the rooms and corridors of this United Nations building, mobilizing members to take firm action against the apartheid regime in South Africa. As we celebrate what would have been O.R. Tambo's one-hundredth birthday, we take this opportunity as a country once again to thank the United Nations and the international community for their support for and solidarity with our struggle for liberation.

If O.R. Tambo were still alive today, he would have pleaded with the Organization to do all it can to support the struggle of the Palestinian people against occupation and to support the struggle of the people of Western Sahara. The world has preached a two-State solution for the situation in Palestine, yet we have seen the expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory. We appeal to the General Assembly that the same resolve shown in supporting the South African struggle for liberation should be shown towards ending the apartheid practices against the people of Palestine.

We also wish to remind the General Assembly that the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination continues to be undermined, challenged and denied. The United Nations must remain seized with that issue, for the benefit of the people of Western Sahara and the African aspirations for integration and peaceful coexistence.

I also wish to register South Africa's disappointment at the decision of the United States Administration in June to reverse the progress that was made in the past two years towards ending the Cuban blockade.

South Africa stands ready to work with the United Nations to promote peace, human rights and sustainable development. As said by our liberation icon Oliver Reginald Tambo,

> "We seek to live in peace with our neighbours and the peoples of the world in conditions of equality, mutual respect and equal advantage."

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of South Africa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Geingob: The President made a profound statement in saying,

> "The United Nations was created for people. Its job is to help people who are striving for peace and a decent life, on a sustainable planet."

Namibia congratulates Mr. Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We pledge our full support to advancing a people-centred approach to doing business at the United Nations. We also commend His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson for his outstanding stewardship during his tenure as President of the General Assembly.

Yesterday the Secretary-General stressed his commitment towards global unity and multilateralism by saying,

> "We call ourselves the international community. We must act as one, because only together, as united nations, can we fulfil the promise of the Charter of the United Nations and advance human dignity for all." (*A/72/PV.3, p. 4*)

As the people of Namibia, we will do everything within our capabilities to support his noble cause during his tenure as Secretary-General of the Organization. We also congratulate Ms. Amina Mohamed, a daughter of Africa, for her well-deserved appointment as Deputy Secretary-General. Let us also not forget His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon and the sterling job he did during his tenure as Secretary-General.

Development that is not driven by the people and does not translate into improved living conditions for all people is meaningless development. Moreover, development that does not reach all people in an equitable manner will only undermine the peace and stability necessary for sustainable development. Growing income disparities, between and within nations, pose the greatest threat to peace within countries and globally.

We in Namibia overcame the inhumane scourge of colonial oppression and racial segregation. Through a deliberate policy of national reconciliation, we succeeded in entrenching peace, security and stability as the pillars of our democracy. We also made significant progress in reducing absolute and relative poverty during the past 27 years. Poverty declined from a high of 70 per cent in 1993 to 18 per cent in 2015. That was in part due to the introduction of a wide range of social safety nets that cover close to 16 per cent of the entire population. While income inequality also declined during the same period, it did not decline by the same magnitude as poverty.

We have come to realize that, as long as we continue to have poverty in Namibia, even if it is just 10 per cent, we can never have lasting peace and social justice. Similarly, as long as the wealth of the country is disproportionately in the hands of a few, we cannot have lasting peace and stability. It is for that reason that we have declared full-scale war against poverty and income inequality. We have also declared full-scale war against corruption, because corruption is one of the root causes of poverty and inequality.

In line with the belief that people must be at the centre of development, we have coined the phrase "No Namibian should feel left out". The logic is simple, for inclusivity spells harmony and peace, whereas exclusivity spells disaster, conflict and potential war. Therefore, we commend the President for his choice of a theme for this session: "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet".

In a climate of ever-increasing uncertainty and unpredictability, it is incumbent upon world leaders to renew faith in multilateralism. The United Nations matters most because it is at the centre of the needs and desires of humankind. Therefore, it must be inclusive by including Africa at the highest decision-making level. By failing to do so, the United Nations runs the risk of losing its respectability. The only sure way to restore trust in the United Nations will be for the Security Council to become more inclusive.

The people of Namibia can testify to the importance of multilateralism. Namibia is a child of international solidarity, conceived through the valiant struggle of Namibian patriots, delivered by resolution 435 (1978) and midwifed by the United Nations. Today, thanks to the support of the international community, we are an independent nation founded on the principles of democracy, unity, stability, peace and the rule of law.

People-centred development should not extend to only a small part of the population. It must cover all demographic components. Too often, the largest demographic component in our societies — namely, our mothers, sisters and daughters — are excluded from development. In Namibia, we believe that gender equity is equally important for a stable and harmonious society. A policy decision by the ruling party to introduce 50-50 representation at all party levels has led to a significant improvement in the representation of females to 48 per cent in Namibia's National Assembly. That is the second-highest level of representation on the continent and among the top five in the world.

To give further meaning to that policy directive, women have also been appointed to key positions in the executive branch. That includes the young Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minster — who is also the Minister for International Relations and Cooperation — the Minister and Deputy Minister for Education, Arts and Culture, the Minister and Deputy Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology, the Minister and Deputy Minister for Urban and Rural Development and the Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration. Those are powerful positions.

Another significant demographic component that we must not neglect is the youth. We in Namibia value the empowerment of the youth. Many of the so-called older guard had been groomed and well prepared in the structures of the ruling party and the Government before they were assigned higher responsibilities. That practice continues with a number of young deputy ministers. Our Attorney General is one of the youngest in the world. Very soon, the last crop of the Tanganyika group — the freedom fighters of the 1960s, including myself — will make way for the new breed.

When we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and acceded to the Paris Agreement, we not only reaffirmed the centrality of multilateralism; we also reaffirmed the reality of climate change. What has happened in Sierra Leone, the Caribbean and some parts of the United States — and we must also note the recent earthquake in Mexico — serve as grim reminders that climate change is real. We have witnessed the stripping away of human dignity, security and hope. We must increase our resolve to address the challenges of climate change.

In order to achieve the ambitions of living on a sustainable planet, peace processes and international peacebuilding must be strengthened. We recognize the contribution of women in promoting global peace, both in peace negotiations and through their active participation in peace missions. Namibia supports efforts to increase the representation of women in peace missions around the world, especially in leadership positions.

Out of 52 United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions, 26 are in Africa. Therefore, we recognize the institutional partnership between the Security Council and the African Union in the maintenance of international peace and security. The partnership not only enhances cooperation between the two institutions, but also adds greater legitimacy to the decisions taken by the Security Council regarding Africa.

Africa should not be seen only as a source of precious primary commodities but as an important and equal partner of the international community with concrete contributions to make. In that context, we welcome the recent Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace

and Security, signed by the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, which will enhance coordination between the Africa Union and the United Nations.

Namibia stands together with the international consensus that the Israeli occupation of Palestine must end. We reiterate that statehood and independence are the national, inalienable and legal rights of the Palestinian people. We join the call for the two-State solution to be pursued with renewed vigour and determination.

Similarly, the people of Western Sahara cannot continue to have their inalienable rights to self-determination and national independence denied. Namibia reaffirms its full and unequivocal support for the rights of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination. We call for the urgent implementation of all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, with the aim of holding a free and fair referendum in Western Sahara.

Over the past several years, Namibia has been noting the growing rapprochement between Cuba and the United States, which culminated in the reopening of embassies in the two countries. We believe that those efforts should lead to the full lifting of the economic and financial embargo against the Republic of Cuba and its people, who have the right to pursue peace and a decent life.

Namibia is committed to supporting the Organization in its efforts to achieve global peace. As Albert Einstein once said, "Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved through understanding". Let us therefore try to be more tolerant and embrace diverse views through dialogue and understanding, before hastily embarking upon a path of force, which will lead only to conflict and, eventually, to war.

The United Nations is a great social experiment. It features small and large nations coexisting in peace and harmony. If the United Nations did not exist today, I would definitely call for the creation of such an organization. Let us continue to treasure the unity of the United Nations, for it is only through unity that we will bring about a world free from fear and conflict. It is only through unity that we will bring about a world free from hunger and poverty. It is only through unity that we will deliver a sustainable planet for our children and their children.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Namibia for the statement just made.

Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Filip Vujanović, President of Montenegro

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Montenegro.

Mr. Filip Vujanović, President of Montenegro, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Filip Vujanović, President of Montenegro, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Vujanović (*spoke in Montenegrin; interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is my pleasure to address the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to reiterate Montenegro's strong commitment to the values of the United Nations.

As one of the newest Members of the Organization, Montenegro actively contributes to maintaining peace and security in its region. Good-neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are at the top our foreign-policy agenda. We are strongly committed to multilateral cooperation and affirm our support for international organizations that contribute to peace and stability.

It is of great importance for Montenegro that it has become the twenty-ninth member of the North Atlantic Alliance. As a member of the Alliance, my country will continue to improve its cooperation and partnership with United Nations peacekeeping operations and with regional organizations dedicated to establishing and maintaining peace and stability. At the same time, Montenegro has proved to be a reliable partner of the European Union. Accession negotiations have already ensured significant economic benefits.

The international community is facing complex challenges such as long-term conflicts, terrorism and violent extremism, refugee crises, the systematic violation of human rights, and poverty. The United

Nations, which was established to prevent war and human suffering, should adjust more quickly in response to those challenges and adopt new mechanisms to prevent conflicts and resolve long-term crises.

The United Nations and international and regional economic organizations have new responsibilities today. Peace, stability, achieving sustainable and inclusive growth and improving international economic relations are the basic elements for achieving the goals set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is therefore of great importance to carry out the successful implementation of the process of reforming the United Nations — and its affiliates the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank — in order to achieve more equitable economic growth, poverty eradication and women's economic empowerment, as well as to bridge the technological gap between countries and regions.

Montenegro remains dedicated to United Nations efforts aimed at implementing the ambitious reform agenda, including the strengthening of the role of the General Assembly and the enlargement of the Security Council, in accordance with the principles of equitable regional representation. Successful cooperation between Montenegro and the United Nations system continues in the framework of the Delivering as One initiative. Positive results of this programme are visible and recognized by many States Members of the United Nations.

Montenegro is part of a region whose experience has shown that dialogue and cooperation are possible and that they are the only way to overcome differences and achieve peace and lasting solutions to problems. Accordingly, early next year, we will organize a regional conference with a view to sharing our experience and helping to define new mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution.

Efforts aimed at preventing terrorism must be focused on its causes. That is the particular responsibility of the countries from which the terrorist threats emerge, but the international community should also offer needed help. We therefore highly appreciate the establishment, upon the initiative of the Secretary-General, of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, which will enable strong leadership and a connection between the United Nations and its Members as they strive to prevent conflicts and terrorism.

Montenegro unequivocally supports the efforts aimed at the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons provides a foundation for the improvement of global stability. Montenegro has defined its national framework in this area by adopting a strategy of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction for the period 2016 to 2020, including an action plan for its implementation.

Montenegro strongly condemns the nuclear-weapon tests conducted by North Korea as acts that violate international obligations pursuant to Security Council resolutions. Those tests pose a serious threat to global peace and security. We support diplomatic efforts aimed at calming the current situation and call on North Korea to fully respect its international obligations.

Highly important multilateral agreements that have been adopted confirm that multilateralism is crucial and essential for achieving peace, inclusive sustainable growth and respect for human rights. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Climate Agreement constitute a universal platform for transformation and progress. For their full implementation to be achieved, therefore, it is necessary to secure the utmost commitment of all Member States, as well as considerable financial resources.

Montenegro strongly supported the negotiations on a new international accord on climate change. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change is a foundation for further efforts in long-term climate preservation. I had the pleasure and honour to participate, on behalf of Montenegro, in the historic Conference in Paris, when the Agreement was adopted, and to take part in its signing ceremony at Headquarters. As part of the efforts to mitigate climate change, Montenegro financially contributes to the Trust Fund of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Respect for human rights is a precondition for peace, stability and development. The full implementation of the international standards and norms relating to the promotion and protection of human rights is an obligation for every country. We are committed to the multilateral system for the protection and promotion of human rights, in particular among the most vulnerable groups, and therefore attach special importance to poverty eradication and the fight against discrimination.

We also attach special importance to strengthening the position and role of women in society, the prevention of violence against women, child protection and development and the fight against discrimination

of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex population and individuals with disabilities. We especially appreciate the joint initiative of the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls and the launch of the global alliance to end trade in tools of torture and capital punishment.

I am certain that its improvement of human rights protection and respect for individuals renders Montenegro a strong candidate for membership of the Human Rights Council for the period 2022-2024. That was also confirmed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, who said that Montenegro was one of 33 United Nations Members to send regular reports on the implementation of international agreements concerning human rights.

We attach special importance to developing key documents on refugees and migrants and point out the necessity of a comprehensive approach, while taking into account the development, humanitarian, security and human rights dimensions. Based on our experience and in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, we are ready to make a concrete contribution to drafting two global compacts.

Its enormous obligation to offer humanitarian assistance to civilians in conflicts and natural disasters obliges the United Nations to reinforce mechanisms for humanitarian aid. Montenegro actively participated in the first World Humanitarian Summit, held last year. The Summit confirmed the need for efficient coordination of international humanitarian assistance. Montenegro has therefore invested significant efforts this year into ensuring that there are appropriate legislative and strategic frameworks for planning in place for managing and financing international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

Finally, on behalf of Montenegro and on my own behalf, allow me to extend our congratulations to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. His persistent commitment to dialogue and cooperation unequivocally confirms that he will be very successful in his high office. I would also like to express great appreciation to the former President, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his achievements in the work related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I take this opportunity to reiterate my most sincere congratulations to new Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres. I am convinced that his rich professional experience, leadership and commitment will contribute to the work and results of the United Nations at this time when the world faces complex challenges. I also express my sincere gratitude to former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his overall contribution to achieving the purposes and principles of the United Nations, as well as for his support for Montenegro. I wish the General Assembly a successful seventy-second session.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Montenegro for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Filip Vujanović, President of Montenegro, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

United Nations A/72/PV.10

General Assembly

Official Records

Seventy-second session

10th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 20 September 2017, 6.05 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Biang (Gabon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Romania.

Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Iohannis: I would like to begin my statement by conveying my condolences to the people of Mexico in the wake of the 19 September earthquake.

Let me welcome the theme of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". Those are very important objectives that will require all of our determination as responsible leaders in order to achieve them, especially when we see obstacles before us. Indeed, people across the globe still suffer from the brutal effects of war, poverty, inequality and injustice. Tensions over cultural identity and faith are rising, even within traditionally open and tolerant societies. Natural disasters cause increasing damage every season. Terrorist attacks deepen the sense of insecurity.

Even if there are some perceptions that the United Nations has not dealt well with the multitude and complexity of the new crises at hand, it is clear that no path serves us better than multilateralism in finding viable solutions for the current global challenges. More than ever, a rules-based international system — namely, the international rule of law — is vital our success. The United Nations has to be equipped with the essential tools to perform as an efficient Organization that reflects the will of its Member States and enjoys the trust of all the people of the planet. At the same time, we, the Member States, must increase our commitment to the Organization.

Developing and sustaining peace require not only a swift and adequate response to crises, but also an understanding of the root causes of conflicts and insecurity, which rarely emerge from a single source. At the same time, the agenda of the United Nations is not only about conflicts and crises; it is also about sustainable development and the promotion of human rights. It is about hope and a decent life for all, which represent the only foundation on which we can build a safe and sustainable planet. Working on education and ensuring the prosperity of our peoples are the most efficient ways to prevent instability and crises. Focusing our actions on people should remain the ultimate goal. How should we achieve that goal?

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We have to drive the implementation of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development forward, including in relation to conflict prevention and sustaining peace, as well as with respect to its Sustainable Development Goals. Romania has formulated essential development policies that will have a real impact on advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We have chosen to involve all political actors, civil society, the private sector and the scientific community in that process. To share our experience in coordinating the national process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to discuss our progress, Romania will submit its voluntary national review during the meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to be held in July 2018.

We cannot lose sight of the stabilizing role that the United Nations plays in setting the broad parameters of contemporary international relations. That is why our efforts to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations should remain strong. At the end of the day, no matter what a reformed Security Council may look like in the future, we need the United Nations to have robust policy-planning capabilities and the ability to project visions for global peace and well-being beyond present crises.

Romania supports the Secretary-General's focus on the creation of an integrated institutional structure for supporting a holistic approach to crisis management. We also strongly advocate for modernizing and increasing the effectiveness of peace operations. We support the Secretary-General in his efforts to pursue meaningful reform on three priorities: conflict prevention, sustainable development and management reform, including reshaping the Secretariat in order to make the United Nations more efficient.

My country also welcomes the reform of the counter-terrorism architecture of the United Nations, as well as the steps taken by the United Nations to make counter-terrorism a key element of its prevention agenda. Since no country can fight such a terrible scourge alone, we trust that the newly established Office of Counter-Terrorism will increase our effectiveness in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In that respect, Romania remains committed to the common initiative, developed with Spain, for the possible future establishment of an international court against terrorism.

We also expect to see the United Nations increase its contribution to global efforts in the area of international migration, including in addressing the problem of its main origins. We hope for a consistent follow-up to the New York Declaration. In my view, it is important to ensure that the global compact for migration, on which negotiations will start soon, will cover every aspect of international migration, to the benefit of both migrants and host communities.

We also support the reinforcement of the human rights dimension within all relevant areas of United Nations activities. That is why I welcome the Secretary-General's Human Rights up Front initiative, which aims to mainstream human rights policies throughout the United Nations system.

Earlier today, I had the pleasure of organizing a debate on a very important topic — making education for peace. The use of identity fears and of the us-versus-them paradigm cannot be left unanswered. In the context of increasing violence and disinformation, Romania is convinced that it is only through quality education that we can counter the extremist trends that our young people are facing today.

At the same time, we continue to be concerned about security developments in and around our region. The belt of protracted conflicts around the Black Sea remains a serious threat. We are still witnessing actions that offend the principles and norms of international law. The proliferation of protracted conflicts in our neighbourhood is an obstacle to regional cooperation and has brought our mutual confidence to a historically low level, which is why the international community should actively support and stimulate regional cooperation and confidence-building measures and decisively address conflicts.

Romania has constantly emphasized the importance of strengthening United Nations cooperation with regional and subregional organizations. To that end, we promoted Security Council resolution 1631 (2005) in our capacity as a non-permanent member of the Council at the time. Romania would be proud to once again bring its contributions to the work of the Security Council. Our bid for a non-permanent seat for the 2020-2021 term is about my country's sincere engagement in supporting the efforts of the United Nations for peace and security and our enduring commitment to peace, development and justice. If that endeavour is successful, we will be honoured to work even harder

for the advancement of our common projects and of the Organization as a whole.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Romania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Malawi.

Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mutharika: The cause that rallies us together is that we are one humankind on one planet. That is the tie that binds us all, and all our differences and national interests are secondary to that overriding cause.

The United Nations was founded to safeguard the human race, its human rights and its potential. We are here to protect people, their existence and their rights. We are here to ensure that the potential of every people, everywhere, fully blossoms into flowers of hope. It is our sacred duty as a generation to take actions that offer hope to following generations.

It is therefore fitting that this year we are meeting to think about focusing on people. In Africa, we should be focusing on investing in the people if the full potential of African people is to be realized. The eradication of poverty and the pursuit of prosperity across the world should be based on raising the potential of the people we seek to support. Development cannot be taken to any people and succeed unless it is driven from within. No human community can take off economically without empowering its people to drive their own development agenda. That is why I underline the importance of investing in our human capital.

However, it is also a foregone conclusion that any effort to invest in the people and raise their potential needs our collaboration as a global family; hence our appeal for concerted action by all States Members of the United Nations and, indeed, many global non-State actors.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nations reflects our global resolve to address the world's most pressing challenges in the spirit of sustainable human collaboration. Our unity among nations is imperative because we achieve more when we unite and collaborate. The well-being of global society is more assured when we work in partnerships for development. At the same time, we achieve more within our nations when we include all sectors of society.

Statistics provided by the United Nations and the World Bank show that there is a correlation between the inclusion and empowerment of women, on the one hand, and economic growth and development, on the other. The inclusion and empowerment of women begin with a focus on the girl child. We need to do away with early marriages. Indeed, I am pleased to note a global drop in early marriages from 36 per cent to 26 per cent over a period of two years since 2015.

Malawi is proud to be part of that achievement. Among other initiatives, my Government has enacted a law against marriage below the age of 18. By law, Malawi provides an opportunity for girls to grow, mature and make informed choices about their education and future life, so they are legally protected in that regard. I am therefore proud to reiterate my Government's commitment to promoting gender equality and women and girls' empowerment in order to reduce the vulnerabilities of women and adolescent girls to violence and all forms of abuse.

Another critical category in the focus on people is young people. Youth empowerment is a way to achieve inclusion. According to *African Economic Outlook 2015*, Africa has the fastest-growing and youngest population in the world. In giving young people the focus they deserve, the African Union agreed in 2015 to designate 2017 the Year of the Youth. This is the year we focus on investing in young people.

Malawi is honoured to be part of the mission for youth empowerment. We have taken decisive measures that include providing technical and entrepreneurial education to the young people who have not had the

opportunity to attend university. At the same time, we are also increasing access to tertiary education.

One more category that needs inclusion is that of persons with disabilities. Malawi is reviewing its policies and strategies in education, health and trade in order to foster the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities. We have also made strides in efforts to eradicate vicious and irrational attacks against persons with albinism. There was a time when these attacks were rampant in some parts of the country. I am glad to report that there have not been any new ones in the past six months.

Malawi is committed to inclusive development. We recognize, however, that the majority of our citizens continue to depend on agriculture for their livelihood. But agriculture is a challenging sector, given the current climate variability affecting many parts of the world. That being the case, Malawi is implementing social protection programmes aimed at cushioning the vulnerable in our society. Our measures include cash transfer programmes, food for work, school feeding programmes and a farm income subsidy programme. I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to cooperating partners, including the United Nations, for their continued technical and other support to the success of these programmes.

As we think of focusing on people, it is important to pay close attention to the issues that affect our most vulnerable citizens. Climate change tops the list. For an economy that depends on agriculture, like that of Malawi, where 85 per cent of the people live in agrarian communities, crop failure is always a tragedy. For the past two years, Malawi has suffered alternating heavy rains, floods and drought that have led to crop failure and hunger. The suffering caused by climate change is evident everywhere; it is real. The people who suffer in these tragedies are not just figures and statistics, but real human souls. We must all feel the urgent need to collectively undertake sustainable management of our natural resources. We must remember that if this planet perishes, we all perish with it. This is a matter that demands our collective responsibility. I therefore appeal to all Member States to consider strategies and avenues of collaboration that will enable us to adapt to the fast-changing climate.

Apart from climate change, our world is also collectively facing the threat of terrorism. Terrorism and conflict hinder progress and leave the world in a state of fear, and anything that causes humankind to live in a state of fear is an evil to be fought. Malawi stands in solidarity with the victims of terrorism across the world. We reaffirm our commitment to standing against all forms of terrorism and we stand in solidarity with the victims of human trafficking and forced migration, wherever they are.

Let me now move on to the question of peace. Peace is a prerequisite for development. As a country, we believe in peace as a necessary condition for human existence. For that reason, Malawi has been active in the peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations of the United Nations and the African Union. Today, Malawi reaffirms its pledge to continue to act as an envoy of peace. We believe that is our duty to humankind. We believe that in protecting our neighbours, we protect ourselves.

While we all seek peace as a necessary condition for existence, we also still face the threat of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are an existential threat to humankind and of concern to us all. Ironically, even those nations that possess nuclear weapons are concerned about such threats. The idea of stockpiling nuclear weapons puts the wisdom of humankind in question. Let me categorically express my Government's disapproval of the spread of ballistic-missile technology, which should not be tolerated in any way by any State Member of the United Nations. No country is too small to contribute to the peace agenda of the world and no continent is too poor to be part of the global peace agenda.

Malawi strongly supports the African position in favour of our continent's full representation on the Security Council. The United Nations can no longer claim to take the lead in democracy while sidelining the representation of 1.2 billion people in Africa. How can we claim to be united with those whom we exclude? Africa must be included at the table of global governance. Our rising Africa is always ready to play its role in the global community, and Malawi will continue to be a global player.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Malawi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana (*spoke in French*): I am very proud and honoured to be addressing the General Assembly at its seventy-second session in my capacity not only as President of the Republic of Madagascar and on behalf of the Malagasy people, but also as President of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and current President of the Summit of la Francophonie.

At the outset, I would like to welcome the election of Mr. Miroslav Lajčák as President of the Assembly and to extend to him my sincerest and warmest congratulations. Madagascar, at his side as a Vice-President of the Assembly, which brings together the 193 States Members of the United Nations, and as host of the sixteenth Summit of la Francophonie, on 26 and 27 November 2016, can only share in the values and ideals that unite us here to achieve a more just and stable world together — development, peace, security and international law.

The theme of our debate, "Focusing on the human being: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", appeals to us all because the very raison d'être of every State is to ensure its people's welfare through the ways and means of their own choosing. For Madagascar, the choice is clear and obvious. We have placed and continue to place the human individual at the centre of our concerns. We therefore welcome the relevance of this year's theme, and I am happy to share with the Members of the Assembly what we have done and strive to do in Madagascar since 2014 to provide a better and decent life for the Malagasy.

The challenges that awaited me in 2014 — when I was elected by the Malagasy people to preside over their destiny on the heels of our protracted emergence from a five-year political, economic and social crisis — were significant. The country and people had been overwhelmed by international sanctions for five years, which exacerbated the poverty rate, affecting 92 per cent of the population, and the incidence of food insecurity and malnutrition. The logical outcome of the crisis was political and social instability and an anaemic economy, not to mention corruption and insecurity.

However, we stepped up to meet those challenges. We were fully convinced that Madagascar had no reason to remain poor, with its potential and its people, more than 50 per cent of whom are women and more than 61.3 per cent under 25 years of age. If everyone makes their own resolute contribution, then I truly believe — optimist that I am — in economic recovery and national reconstruction leading to renewed growth. Those three pillars will enable our State to consolidate a people-centred approach. In fact, like many of the leaders and high-ranking officials present in the Hall, I am an upbeat optimist about my country, my continent and our collective future. Faced with challenges, I often think about what Nelson Mandela said:

> "After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. It always seems impossible until done."

There can be no doubt that this affirmation holds true for us all.

Today, one year before Madagascar's 2018 presidential elections, after continued and determined efforts, I can say that Madagascar has reached a milestone and a level that gives rise to the highest hopes, given the progress made in terms of both political stability, however fragile, and economic and social prospects. In that context, I can say that since 2016, Madagascar has raised $6.4 billion in global investment and aid from institutional donors. That has enabled us to start investing in key sectors of our economy and the future of our country. Worksites have been opened everywhere with a view to permanently reducing the poverty of my country and assisting our most vulnerable strata. Our efforts have included institutional standardization, good governance and the establishment of conditions conducive to improving the political climate, in particular through national reconciliation and implementation of our national

development plan for revitalizing our economy through realizing the real potential of our wealth.

Our policy of establishing basic infrastructure in many sectors is beginning to bear fruit. We have received support from our partners in implementing the bases of the 2015-2019 national development plan in agriculture, cattle-raising, energy and fisheries. Lastly, we have shown that Madagascar can play a part on the world stage by successfully hosting and organizing regional and international summits, including for the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Summit of la Francophonie, of which we are currently President.

This year, we intend to pursue projects that include establishing special economic zones in two areas, creating pilot digital cities, accelerating our energy transition and strengthening basic infrastructure to improve education and public health. In the social sector, too, we are investing in education and training doctors, teachers and engineers.

In order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, my Government has developed an ambitious education sector plan to ensure that children in Madagascar have access to quality education. We are also investing in rebuilding our health-care system, which was gutted and destroyed during the years under sanctions. We have also reopened the health centres that were closed during the crisis periods in order to revitalize the network and expand it nationally.

In general, we have established a platform for strengthening our health-care system to coordinate the health-related interventions of our various partners and improve our monitoring of disease. Madagascar has created a digital epidemiological surveillance system that enables it to monitor in real time 28 diseases that have the potential to become epidemics. In addition, the Government has taken steps to promote long-term actions such as launching universal health coverage and reducing maternal and infant mortality, a major aspect of maternal, newborn and child health.

The budget for nutrition has been increased, agricultural production has been diversified and specific water, sanitation and nutrition projects targeting vulnerable populations have been implemented through our national nutrition action plan.

We are also investing in infrastructure to create jobs and accelerate economic growth. We are investing in ports, highways, bridges and airports, which will reintegrate Madagascar into the global economy. We are also strengthening our tourism industry to create decent, paying jobs and preserve our unique and invaluable ecology and biodiversity. In that context, Madagascar has always sought to uphold its international commitments. The commitment we entered into in Durban in 2002 to tripling our protected area has been honoured; today those areas encompass more than 6.9 million hectares, in addition to our marine protected areas.

In order to effectively tackle poverty, we must sustainably create wealth for the largest possible number of people while ensuring the responsible management of natural resources and combating global warming. We must also develop and implement appropriate sustainable development as quickly as possible. Low-carbon, inclusive and shared growth that creates jobs, in particular for women and young people, must be the economic model of tomorrow in order to ensure that future generations enjoy better living conditions in a protected environment.

Given climate change and the threats to natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, we have no choice but to act quickly and we must not waste time. We therefore support the initiatives of the President of France aimed at putting a global environment pact in place. I take this opportunity to thank the Kingdom of Morocco for providing financial assistance to Madagascar, which is currently suffering from drought, in the framework of bilateral South-South cooperation. That is concrete action.

Our agriculture, which accounts for 26.4 per cent of our overall gross domestic product and employs more than 75 per cent of the workforce, is considered one of the main drivers of our economy. We are making additional efforts to meet the challenges of establishing and developing agribusiness through land reform in order to enable peasants to own land. We are increasing productivity, building infrastructure, guiding production to allow access to markets, capital, seeds and inputs, and providing technical services and training.

Given all of this, the economic outlook for Madagascar is favourable; our growth rate is around 4 per cent in 2017 and next year will exceed 5 per cent. That will create economic momentum and help to establish a new development trajectory for improving

the lives of the people of Madagascar. Our aim is to raise Madagascar to the rank of a middle-income country by 2030.

I take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that we have begun a reform process for improving the independence of our judiciary and our anti-corruption office. We have prepared measures to protect the integrity of our democratic processes, not to mention public security, which is a very sensitive area in Madagascar. The reforms we have undertaken have allowed us to enjoy lasting economic recovery, and I am convinced that this recovery will be supported by greater investment. Our economic growth rate is expected to reach more than 6 per cent per year by 2020. That is attainable.

Yesterday, in his speech at the opening of the general debate (see A/72/PV.3), the President of the General Assembly expressed the hope that next year his successor would be able to commend the progress made at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly with regard to such global challenges as the state of global peace and security, global disparities and inequalities, persistent poverty, the outrageous fact that we have more than 65 million refugees, international terrorism, human rights, the preservation of the planet and so forth. The General Assembly already has the tools it needs to do this, and now it is a matter of strengthening them and improving the way they are used by emphasizing prevention. Madagascar will support the President in that regard.

This is also an opportunity for me to reiterate from the magnificent sounding board that is the rostrum of the General Assembly the appeal launched in Antananarivo at the sixteenth Summit of la Francophonie:

> "Our Francophone community, aware of its responsibilities and based on the Antananarivo Declaration, is determined to work for shared growth, sustainable and responsible development, and the establishment of fairer and more united economic relations by strengthening our dialogue and influence in international forums. By holding high our values of solidarity and sharing for a more peaceful world, we call for a new model of sustainable and inclusive development that responds to the concerns and meets the expectations of our peoples."

We must also recall the importance of investing in youth.

I was pleased to learn yesterday that the first meeting of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, which was established at the initiative of the Secretary-General, will be held next year. Madagascar expresses its readiness to work closely with the United Nations to sustainably eradicate the scourge of terrorism.

Finally, I cannot conclude without expressing my heartfelt sympathy for Mexico, which just yesterday experienced a new, deadly earthquake in Mexico City. On behalf of the country and the people of Madagascar and myself, I would like to express my solidarity, compassion and sincere condolences to the President, the people and the Government of Mexico, with special thoughts for those who have lost loved ones.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sall (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation would like to thank the President of the General Assembly at its previous session and to wish the current President every success in guiding the work of our session. I would also like to reiterate our congratulations and support to Secretary-General António Guterres for the success of his mission at the head of the Organization.

The theme of the seventy-second session commits us to focusing on people for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet. Unfortunately, in these times of turbulence and uncertainty, the ideal of a better

world for all comes up against the crises of a world of conflict that is also in conflict with itself.

On the security and humanitarian fronts, millions of individuals continue to suffer every day from the ravages of war, terrorism and violence in all their forms. With regard to food crises, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization, more than 1 billion tons of food are wasted each year, while more than 795 million people go hungry every day.

Where the environment is concerned, global warming has reached an unprecedented level, while agreed-on commitments to addressing the related crises, including adequate Green Climate Fund financing, have been slow to materialize.

With regard to our ethical and moral crises, we see the universal mission of democracy and human rights proclaimed at the same time that it turns in on itself and lets extremist, racist and xenophobic tendencies re-emerge. These dangerous excesses, born out of the absurd claim that one race, civilization or culture is superior to others, have inspired the worst tragedies of history, including slavery, colonization, the Holocaust and apartheid.

If we yield to these abuses, we renounce the founding values of the United Nations. We forget that the true challenges of our time lie elsewhere, such as in the fight against the threat of terrorism. Senegal, I emphasize, vigorously condemns terrorism wherever it may strike. Nothing, and certainly not religion, can justify violent fanaticism. At the same time, we cannot accept the equation of Islam with violence. We cannot accept that Muslims are held accountable for violence of which they themselves are victims.

We are all concerned about the terrorist threat. We therefore have a responsibility to work together to find agreed solutions to this scourge. That is the purpose of the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa, whose fourth meeting will be held on 13 and 14 November. Among other topics, the Forum will focus on the doctrinal response of Islam vis-à-vis violent extremism. We wish to see an Africa of peace and security, a place that does not serve as a haven for terrorist groups that are fought and defeated elsewhere. That is why Senegal remains engaged in seven peacekeeping operations, including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and welcomes the efforts of the Group of Five for the Sahel and its partner States in the fight against terrorism.

I would like to reiterate our support for the national peace and reconciliation process under way in our sister Republic of Mali, a process that is taking place with respect for the country's territorial integrity and in accordance with Security Council resolution 2374 (2017).

In the Middle East, Senegal reiterates the right of the Palestinian people to a viable State, living side by side in peace with the State of Israel, each within secure and internationally recognized borders.

In Burma, we are seriously concerned about the abuses of the Muslim Rohingya population. We therefore cannot allow outrage to be a selective emotion, and Senegal urges the international community to take action to put an end to this genuine human tragedy.

In a world of interaction and interdependence, peace today, more so than in the past, is not merely the absence of war. It is also the preservation of the planet's resources, the scarcity of which increases the risk of internal crises and of international conflicts. It is vital to safeguard the integrity of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The future of the planet is at stake.

Peace also requires fairer international trade that paves the way for progress and prosperity for all. The world cannot be at peace with itself as long as there endures a system of unequal exchanges in which the haves continue to earn more and the have-nots to have even less. We must work for mutually beneficial exchanges that protect investment, pay fairly for raw materials and generate shared prosperity. That is the best way to overcome poverty, to support Africa's efforts to emerge and to curb illegal migratory movements.

As the current Chair of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, I welcome the Compact with Africa initiative, launched by Germany within the framework of the Group of 20, to stimulate investment on the African continent. As part of this new momentum of support for development through partnership, Senegal looks forward to hosting three major events on the international community's agenda. They are the third Africa Investment Forum, from 25 to 27 September, in cooperation with China and the World Bank; the International Conference on Quality Infrastructure in January 2018, at the initiative of Japan; and, on 8 February 2018, the replenishment

conference for the Global Partnership for Education Fund, amounting to $3.1 billion over three years. By mobilizing these resources, we will give millions of children the opportunity to go to school and achieve their dreams of a fulfilled life. I thank France for sponsoring the conference, together with Senegal, and we invite all partner and beneficiary States to attend.

The President took the Chair.

The positive changes we seek to promote in the world's affairs will succeed only in the context of an inclusive and equitable momentum that reconciles all of our interests. To that end, the time has come to afford Africa the place it deserves on the Security Council, as called for in the Ezulwini Consensus. It is time to reform the rules of global economic and financial governance, including by combating tax evasion more effectively to help mobilize domestic resources for development financing. It is time to stop seeing Africa as a continent of the future, content with random and uncertain promises that others design, write and interpret on its behalf. Africa wishes to be a stakeholder in a present that takes its interests and its need to emerge into account through renewed and mutually beneficial partnerships. It is in that spirit that Senegal will continue to work with all friendly countries and partners after its mandate on the Security Council ends, in a few months' time.

Despite the uncertainties and difficulties of our times, we must continue to have faith in multilateralism. Preceding generations had the wisdom to understand that isolationism and belligerency are a dead end. Out of the ruins of war, they built the foundations of peace; but it is a peace that is always a work in progress. Whenever its foundations falter, all humankind is threatened. The wisdom of our predecessors demands that we work together to safeguard peace, in the name of our shared humanity, which brings us together and assigns us a shared destiny.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Senegal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Mswati III: Allow me to express our sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We commend you for immediately identifying six overarching priorities for your tenure, which touch on attaining peace, giving impetus to the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change commitments, equality and human rights for all, among others. These priorities truly capture several of the current troublesome global challenges and we look forward to working closely with you on these issues.

The Kingdom of eSwatini would also like to commend the leadership of the new Secretary-General, who is committed to transforming the United Nations into an Organization fit for the twenty-first century. Reform of the United Nations and its attendant bodies has been under discussion for a long time. My delegation believes that fresh impetus must be given to this process and tangible progress made. We are therefore encouraged by the Secretary-General's intention to refocus our attention on the reform agenda.

Reform of the Security Council is a key aspect of the process, and no transformation could be complete without its fundamental change. To that end, the Kingdom of eSwatini wishes to reiterate Africa's call for a permanent seat on the Security Council, in accordance with the Ezulwini Consensus. The United Nations is urged to listen to the voice of the millions of Africans who want to contribute to the welfare of the global community as equal partners.

We are confident that under the able leadership of the Secretary-General, the United Nations will reach greater heights in its support for countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The United Nations staff are also to be congratulated on their remarkable work in

supporting inclusive and sustainable development, tackling diseases, promoting peace and stability and creating a conducive environment for humankind to live in, sometimes under extremely inimical conditions.

The theme of this session — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — resonates perfectly with the motto of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of leaving no one behind. The theme is indeed cross-cutting in nature, as it affects every aspect of life. It calls on all of us to work to create peaceful countries, continents and a sustainable world in which people can lead peaceful and prosperous lives. In that regard, we wish to urge Member States to join hands in addressing the issue of nuclear threats, which have the potential to disrupt world peace. No country has the right to make the world an unsafe place to live in, and we owe it to our people and future generations to put a stop to nuclear threats.

Terrorism remains a threat to the safety of our peoples in various parts of the world. It is a setback to key development issues that deserve the priority attention of the United Nations.

The Kingdom of eSwatini is committed to peace and a decent life for all. We are also firm believers in the principle of consultative decision-making, which is a transparent and all-inclusive undertaking and grants all citizens an opportunity to voice their views so as to constructively contribute to our country's social, economic, cultural and political development.

We are committed to the SDGs, as they provide a development framework within which the global community is able to strive for the inclusive and sustainable development of its respective countries. We have taken several initiatives to mainstream and localize the SDGs through public-awareness campaigns, consultations, education and training at all levels. The Kingdom of eSwatini has also integrated the Goals into its national development strategy, which has been revised to ensure that it is linked to the SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063. Appropriate institutional arrangements are now in place for properly monitoring the implementation of the Goals at all levels.

Sustainable Development Goal 13 calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. That urgency is now a global reality, and recent weather episodes around the world, such as hurricanes, floods and mudslides, have shown that no nation is immune to its effects. The Kingdom of eSwatini is no exception. In 2015 and 2016, the southern African countries, including our Kingdom, faced a severe drought. Its devastating effects, aggravated by the fall armyworm, adversely affected crop production. Funds from other projects and activities were diverted to mitigate the challenges. The scale of the drought led the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to declare it a natural disaster. We are grateful to the United Nations, our development partners, the international community, non-governmental organizations and other local organizations for supporting us during that period.

The Government will continue its programme of farming input subsidies for our farmers, and developing adequate water-harvesting infrastructure to enhance food sufficiency will always remain one of our top priorities. We urge donors and all nations not only to fulfil their pledges to the Green Fund but also to adopt policies that strike a correct balance between the production of essential products and the environmental sustainability we need to protect and preserve the world for future generations.

The net enrolment ratio in primary schools in the Kingdom increased significantly from 79.2 per cent in 2000 to 97.7 per cent in 2015, in a reflection of my country's efforts to ensure that all children have access to education, irrespective of their socioeconomic status. The Government is also providing for our children's needs by placing greater focus on assisting those who are orphaned and vulnerable through various programmes that ensure that they too can access free primary-school education and have adequate nutrition through school feeding schemes.

In our quest to achieve a decent life for all, and in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Africa's Agenda 2063, the Kingdom of eSwatini has put in place several all-inclusive initiatives that are aimed at ensuring that no one is left behind. The Government also provides grants to the elderly as a way of supplementing their livelihoods.

The Kingdom is also developing innovation parks that will equip our young people with creative skills that can enable them to contribute to the country's sustainable development. We would like to forge partnerships with well-established international parks to leverage and learn from their experience, and we have urged our private sector to take advantage of that initiative. We believe that together with many others,

this initiative will help to nurture a future generation that is skilled and well equipped to provide solutions to the socioeconomic challenges and youth unemployment that our nation is facing.

The Kingdom of eSwatini will host the SADC University of Innovation and Technology, which is expected to produce highly skilled manpower and provide solutions for transforming economies, thereby enabling countries in the SADC region to close their skills gap. We are seeking the support of highly educated facilitators and the international community to make that project a reality.

Tackling poverty, hunger and the disease burden and improving our people's basic standards of living have been at the centre of our Vision 2022 and national development strategy. The importance of human capital investment and promoting the interests of vulnerable groups represent crucial steps towards economic growth and prosperity.

I have full confidence in our innovative and educated workforce, which has demonstrated an indomitable spirit and resilience in overcoming the severe social, economic and environmental challenges of recent times. As a result, our national guiding theme for 2017 is "Rising above adversity to create prosperity for all". The critical importance of the demographic dividend to Africa's transformative development has been acknowledged by African leaders. They have recognized the urgent need to accelerate the implementation of the African Union Roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth.

The HIV and AIDS pandemic remains one of our priority areas, as it continues to undermine our sustainable development objectives. It is stretching our health resources to the limit and calls for collective action on the part of the Government, international donors and other stakeholders to address it. As a nation, we have decided to work to reach AIDS-free status by 2022, a vision in line with Sustainable Development Goal 3, ending AIDS by 2030.

We are pleased to be able to inform the Assembly of the positive results we have attained through our concerted policies in tackling this scourge. Key findings from Swaziland's second HIV incidence measurement survey show that we have achieved a more than 70 per cent viral load suppression among adults living with HIV. We also reduced HIV incidence by nearly half between 2011 and 2016, a major achievement. While we are encouraged by these results, we will continue to do everything in our ability to ensure that there are no new infections.

We are also pleased to mention that our efforts to tackle malaria eradication are being recognized. We were honoured that during the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa in January, Africa's Heads of State and Government elected us Chair of the African Leaders' Malaria Alliance. Tomorrow we will hold a side event on malaria here at United Nations Headquarters. Malaria is a scourge that requires our concerted efforts to eradicate from the face of the Earth. We aim to partner with our private sector in Africa and beyond to mobilize resources to combat it. We appreciate our partners' support and also appeal to financial institutions, development partners and donors to join us in this fight, since it will pay handsome dividends for the people of our beloved African continent.

Among the political issues that have continued unresolved for too long is the denial of the right of the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to participate in the United Nations system. Taiwan has shown significant commitment to the ideals of the United Nations and has aligned its priorities with those of the Organization. Humankind could therefore benefit a great deal from Taiwan's experience in the framework of our global agenda as Member of the United Nations.

I reaffirm the full commitment of the Government of the Kingdom of eSwatini to implementing the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, it is worth noting that while our Goals may be universal, we do not all have the same capabilities and capacities for implementing them. As we recognize those resource and capacity constraints, therefore, we need to enhance resources, capacity-building, technology transfer and South-South cooperation so as to support lower middle-income countries, along with the least developed countries, in achieving our ambitious and transformative Agenda.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the statement he has just made.

King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya.

Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Serraj (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and to wish you every success in your work. I commend your predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, for all his efforts and wish him every success in his future endeavours. I would also like to note the ongoing wise efforts of Secretary-General Guterres to implement the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in the areas of peace, security and human rights.

The members of the General Assembly are aware of the challenges that my people are facing in these very trying times, starting with the revolution of February 2011 and its consequences, which have been a war and the negative involvement of a number of States. We have striven to mitigate and reduce our people's suffering and to achieve real success. However, a great many problems remain and will not be resolved without the joint efforts of my country and of friendly States and the United Nations to enable us to establish the rule of law and democracy in Libya.

I would like to commend the efforts of all those who have worked to find a political settlement to the crisis and to thank a number of States and regional and international organizations — including the League of Arab States, the African Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations — for helping us to restore stability in my country. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the new Special Envoy, Mr. Ghassan Salamé, and to wish him every possible success in proposing rapid solutions to the current crisis.

The Libyan Political Agreement reached following two years of negotiations remains the cornerstone for our efforts to address various problems and build the institutions of State. We are undergoing a transition that will ensure that we can coexist, leave the past behind us and stabilize our country, and the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord is the fruit of all this work. It is essential to implementing and carrying out national reconciliation with the participation of all, without exception.

Since the outset we have been determined to confront our crises, despite the difficulties they pose, with wisdom, patience and foresight, and we have been able to resolve a number of problems. We have put an end to the violence in Tripoli and other Libyan cities, where law enforcement and security agencies have started to discharge their mission. A number of embassies have returned, as will the United Nations Support Mission in Libya in the near future. Certain displaced individuals have returned to their home cities, although that has not been possible for others, owing to the lack of services, undermined by the military clashes. We continue to work to restore peace and security and rid ourselves of those trying to spoil things.

In the economic field, we are now producing 1 million barrels of oil a day, up from 150,000 in March 2016. We must also mitigate the suffering that many have been experiencing during this development period, and we hope that with the restoration of security, the provision of the necessary financial resources and the resumption of activity by foreign firms we will be able to rebuild our State. We have demanded that the embargo on frozen assets be lifted, because it is costing the Libyan State close to $1 billion a year, and we sincerely hope that this will happen, especially since current circumstances are improving.

In the area of national reconciliation, we have held a number of meetings aimed at achieving unity and resolving our differences and divisions. The decision-making monopoly of the Presidency of the Council of Deputies has resulted in political stagnation, preventing the majority from implementing the Political Agreement. In July, we came up with a road map for extricating ourselves from this crisis, providing for a referendum and presidential and parliamentary elections next year and the establishment of a supreme

national council for reconciliation, mandated to address such issues as compensation, amnesty and others during the transition period. This positive vision was reaffirmed at the Paris meeting, where a consensus was reached on our progress towards democracy and the peaceful settlement of our problems through elections rather than armed confrontation — needless to say with the exception of the war against terrorism, which must continue — and through the restoration of ourmilitary and executive institutions.

With regard to the fight against terrorism, we were successful in our attempt to liberate the cities of Sirte and Benghazi, among others, from Da'esh. However, we continue to have problems in dealing with the consequences of their seizure by terrorist organizations. We pay tribute to the memory of the martyrs who have laid down their lives to liberate the cities of Libya, and reiterate the need for a strategic partnership with all friendly States, especially the United States of America, which we thank for its support in halting the acts of these terrorist organizations.

We must all understand that the fight against terrorism is not over. There are new hotbeds of tension and terrorism. Terrorists who have fled Iraq and Syria have now come to our country. We ask to be allowed to rebuild our army so that it can confront them and protect our country.

My country is experiencing other difficulties, including illegal migration. A number of migrants have entered Libyan territory and used it as a transit country on their way to Europe across the Mediterranean. Libya suffers from this problem just as other States do. It is a burden on our already very limited resources and has a number of adverse security and economic consequences. We also lack the necessary resources to tackle the armed smuggling networks plaguing our country. We thank all who have helped us to address with this problem, especially Italy, which has recently provided training assistance in a number of cities. We welcome the support provided by France, Italy and Germany, especially in monitoring our southern borders, where most illegal migrants cross. We do not possess the capacity to tackle this problem alone.

Another issue related to the migrants and refugees in Libya is how to pay for the aid they need. The Government of National Accord is working to assist them as much as possible, and we welcome the help we have had from humanitarian organizations, especially in the form of shelters. We would like to return these refugees to their homes rather than grant them citizenship in our country. Libya participated with European States in the Paris summit at which an agreement emerged aimed at finding political solutions to restoring stability throughout Libya. It was also agreed that we need to be provided with the assistance necessary to fund development programmes in the migrants' countries of origin.

My country views human rights as extremely important. Since the 2011 revolution we have adopted a number of laws promoting human rights, but as this is a transitional period we are still working to restore State authority throughout the country, and that has naturally had an impact on the security situation. The Presidency Council is applying the no-impunity principle in order to gradually enable the law-enforcement agencies to take up their necessary functions. We would like to benefit from United Nations technical expertise in the field of human rights, and we have therefore been inviting human rights special programmes to visit Libya since 2012, as was reiterated during the thirty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council in March.

One of the crucial current issues for the United Nations is Security Council reform. In that regard, we welcomed the Council's adoption of resolution 2378 (2017) a couple of days ago. We hope that reform will help us in developing the role of our Organization by, for instance, granting a permanent seat on the Security Council to the African continent, in keeping with the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration on the reform of the United Nations.

The situation in the Middle East remains an absolute priority. Despite the crises that we are experiencing, we have spared no effort to support the Palestinian people in their attempts to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. We reiterate our support for the Arab Peace Initiative to settle the Palestinian issue, and we urge the world's major Powers to assume their responsibilities in that regard. We wish to see a peaceful solution to the crises in Syria and Yemen in order to protect them from division and collapse as a result of the destructive conflicts raging through their countries and to fulfil the aspirations of their peoples in a dignified way that respects human rights and the rule of law.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for holding a special meeting on Libya this morning that

attracted a great deal of international interest and at which everyone present reaffirmed that the backdrop to any solution must be a political one. Assistance will be needed for the presidential and parliamentary elections next year. We ask the Secretary-General and the Special Representative for Libya, Mr. Ghassan Salamé, to present us with a timeline and send a clear message to all who attempt to hinder the process that there can be no military solution and that negotiations with authorities parallel to the Government of National Accord must stop, as they are in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. I would like to reiterate our desire for all sectors of the Libyan population to be able to exercise their rights to national self-determination and live in a State that enjoys the rule of law.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya for the statement that he has just made.

Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nauru.

Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Waqa: It is an honour to be here for the opening of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. On behalf of the Republic of Nauru, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your recent assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly. Please be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you steer its work during this critical session. I would also like to thank the outgoing President, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his exceptional work.

At this juncture, I would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest sorrow and condolences to our brothers and sisters who have suffered so much from the series of hurricanes in the Caribbean and the United States and to our brothers and sisters in Mexico for the devastating earthquakes. Their suffering and grief is shared by us all, and we pray that God will be their strength and great provider during their recovery efforts.

The Government of Nauru shares the international community's view that full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be at the centre of our work in the coming year. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a universal agreement representing our collective priorities, from the largest to the smallest nations among us. Bringing that same approach to our implementation effort is the only way to ensure that no country is left behind.

Members will recall the five words that guided our work on the SDGs — people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership — which, I am sure, gave inspiration to the President's choice of a theme for this new session of the General Assembly. Those five words are broad enough to encompass our collectively held ideals while accommodating our tremendous diversity. In the case of Nauru, our status as a small island developing State underlies every aspect of the lives of my people.

The global economic system was not created with small islands in mind. Small size and population, geographic isolation, few natural resources and a high level of vulnerability to economic and environmental shocks are among the characteristics that make small islands a special case for development. Our people crave prosperity just like anyone else. However, the well trodden pathways to development are simply not available to us.

More than most, our prospects depend on a stable planet, including a safe climate and healthy oceans. That is why Nauru was among the first countries in the world to ratify the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and why we have made the implementation of our national contribution to the Agreement our top priority. Nearly every country has made that solemn commitment, and we are now two years closer to the time when we will be held to account.

With regard to climate action in developing countries, implementation is a collective responsibility. As developing countries, we have demonstrated our political will to be part of the global effort, but most of us lack the resources to fully implement our contributions alone. In that regard, we call on our development

partners to step up their assistance programmes. Nauru's climate priorities fall into four categories — renewable energy, land rehabilitation, water security and infrastructure-proofing. We are looking to build genuine and durable partnerships to achieve those objectives.

While the Paris Agreement was a historic diplomatic achievement, we must remember that we remain well off track for achieving its central goal of keeping warming below 1.5°C. Failure to achieve that goal would be devastating for small islands, but we should not pretend that any additional warming is safe. Negative impacts in the form of superstorms, irregular rain patterns and heatwaves are here with us now and will continue to get worse for the foreseeable future. As I said at last year's World Humanitarian Summit, all of us must face up to some very difficult questions. How will we feed a planet of 9 billion people when crop yields are projected to fall? How will we share declining freshwater resources as glaciers disappear and drought becomes commonplace in many regions? How will we protect the millions who are rendered homeless when low-lying coastal areas are inundated? How can those and many other challenges be managed effectively so that we can avoid breakdowns in governance and a proliferation of failed States?

It is difficult to see how we can realize our vision for a peaceful planet without answers to those questions. Climate change will be the defining security challenge of the century, and we are simply not prepared for life on a hotter planet. For that reason, Nauru supports the proposal by the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS) that the United Nations appoint a Special Representative on climate and security, whose work must begin with an assessment of the United Nation's capacity to respond to climate disasters.

In addition to a safe climate, the prosperity of Nauru's people depends on a healthy ocean. In that regard, we must show ambition in tackling the mounting threats to the health of our oceans. The special case of SIDS needs to be enshrined in our work across all ocean sectors and in the new implementing agreements on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Launching and concluding an intergovernmental conference to draft a new implementing agreement in line with the common heritage of mankind that would allow for the protection and preservation of the oceans should be an urgent priority in that work. The security of our oceans is another problem that all of us must tackle.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is another great threat and represents an economic loss to our small economy. Along with transnational crimes that occur within our waters and those of our neighbours, it is an issue that requires cooperation on a number of fronts through inter-agency and intercountry partnerships. I call on our friends and partners to continue with existing programmes, such as the Shiprider Agreement and other ongoing bilateral cooperation arrangements negotiated by the United States, as well as the maritime surveillance programmes provided by Australia and New Zealand. We look forward to partnering with other law-enforcement agencies throughout the Asia-Pacific and beyond.

In order for the people of Nauru to benefit from those global efforts to protect the climate and ocean, we will have to build genuine and durable partnerships that are based on mutual respect and a clear understanding of the real needs on the ground. Too often, small countries like mine have been excluded from international programmes. Funding mechanisms can be effectively impossible to access because the application and reporting requirements exceed the capacity of our domestic institutions. Private investment is unreliable and rarely available to support the provision of basic services and the construction of critical infrastructure. Meanwhile, the most promising financing models for small developing countries, such as direct access and direct budgetary support, are rarely offered by our development partners. That must change. We need our partners to meet the needs of small and vulnerable countries.

We know that we too must become better partners, which is why my country has emphasized the importance of capacity-building as a critical component of our international cooperation. In order for our people to prosper, we must invest in building their knowledge and skills. There is no shortage of workshops held in the Pacific region. What Nauru needs is a sustained capacity-building effort that is backed by real resources, including the long-term, in-country presence of our development partners when appropriate, so that we are left with strong domestic institutions run by a skilled domestic workforce.

I cannot stress the importance of a robust capacity-building programme enough. As a former schoolteacher,

I am passionate about the importance of high-quality education for my people. We have our own training programmes for our high school and tertiary students, as well as programmes for those already in the workforce. We acknowledge the generous support of our friends and partners, who have provided scholarships and technical workshops that are invaluable to our long-term development, particularly in high-priority areas such as the health sector, education, engineering, public administration and good governance.

Having a healthy economy and a productive people also requires international relations to be peaceful and stable, not only in the Pacific but throughout the world. With regard to the Pacific region, Nauru calls on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to enter into dialogue with the other countries involved in the dispute on the Korean peninsula. The threats made against the Republic of Korea, Japan, Guam and cities of the United States do not help the situation, and they potentially put many small countries in the Pacific, including Nauru, in the line of fire. That is completely unacceptable, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must stop such threats, including the launching of rockets into the Pacific Ocean.

Further to the south, we have in Taiwan a State that is peaceful, prosperous and happy. Taiwan has the technical and financial capacity to contribute to world peace and development, particularly where its technical prowess and know-how are concerned. It wishes to contribute and participate freely through the partnerships and activities of the United Nations system, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the World Health Organization, UNESCO, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other United Nations-related agencies and activities. In order to ensure that the Taiwanese people can make positive contributions to societies around the world, they must be given the freedom to travel where they choose. We are, after all, a world that calls for inclusiveness and for no one to be left behind. In that same spirit, Nauru renews its call for an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba.

The phrase "people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership" elegantly captures the scope of our work over the coming year and beyond. However, there is another word that begins with *P* that we must not ignore. That word is power. Power will determine whether resources are mobilized for people or for profiteering. Power will determine whether the voices of the marginalized are heard. Power will determine whether we leave a healthy and bountiful planet for future generations. To ignore the role of power in shaping our future is to cede what little power we may have. If we are to achieve our ambitious goals for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable planet, we will have to grapple with power as it actually exists in the world, including all of its inequities and perversities. That will undoubtedly be the most difficult aspect of the task before us.

In closing, I would like to thank the Governments of Australia, Taiwan, New Zealand, Japan, India, the Russian Federation, the European Union, Italy, Israel, Cuba, the Republic of Korea and the United States for their continued support and assistance to Nauru. We value their friendship very much, and we look forward to their continued cooperation and support.

Along those lines, I would like to make a special acknowledgement to the United Nations for the support it provided to Nauru nearly 50 years ago, leading to our independence. On 31 January 2018, we will celebrate our golden jubilee as a sovereign and democratic nation. I would also like to thank all the countries that supported us in exercising our self-determination and achieving our independence.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nauru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Henry Van Thio, Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Henry Van Thio, Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Henry Van Thio, Vice-President

of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Van Thio (Myanmar): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We are confident that under your able leadership, this year's session will be fruitful.

Before I go into the substance of my statement, I would like to take the opportunity to express my deepest sympathy to the Government and the people of Mexico for the loss of life and property caused by the deadly earthquake that hit Mexico City.

I also wish to convey our profound sympathy to the Governments and the peoples of the United States and States of the Caribbean, which have experienced the horrendous consequences of consecutive hurricanes in a short span of two weeks. Our sympathies also go to the people of Puerto Rico, who are still reeling from the effects of Hurricane Maria. The intensity and frequency of such natural disasters are evidence of climate change, now becoming a reality that poses a serious threat to our planet. Its impacts are global in scope and unprecedented in scale. Myanmar is highly vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change, so as a country frequently affected by storms, floods and droughts we welcome the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that yesterday Myanmar deposited with the Secretary-General its instruments of ratification of the Paris Agreement and the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol.

We welcome the current session's theme, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". Peace and stability are something that we are striving to achieve in Myanmar after nearly seven decades of civil strife and conflict.

Last year, from this rostrum, our State Counsellor, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, set out our Government's vision for ending decades of internal armed conflict in Myanmar and finding lasting and meaningful solutions to the complex situation in Rakhine state (see A/71/PV.11). Today, one year later, I am here to apprise the Assembly of the progress that we have made and the remaining challenges that lie before us. Given that the situation in Rakhine state has understandably been the focus of the world's attention in recent weeks, let me start by addressing that issue.

Yesterday, the State Counsellor briefed the diplomatic corps in Myanmar on the Government's efforts to promote national reconciliation and peace. She highlighted the achievements of the past 18 months and the challenges that remain. With respect to the situation in Rakhine, she said that Myanmar shares the concern of the international community regarding the displacement and suffering experienced by all communities affected by the latest round of terrorist attacks. She also stressed that:

> "We condemn all human rights violations and unlawful violence. We are committed to the restoration of peace, stability and the rule of law throughout Rakhine state. The security forces have been instructed to adhere strictly to the code of conduct in carrying out security operations, to exercise all due restraint and to take full measures to avoid collateral damage and the harming of innocent civilians. Human rights violations and all other acts that impair stability and harmony and undermine the rule of law will be addressed in accordance with strict norms of justice. We feel deeply for the suffering of all of the people who have been caught up in the conflict."

The situation in Rakhine has been one of the top priorities of the Government since it assumed office. The Government has been endeavouring to restore peace and stability and to promote harmony among all communities. The Central Committee on the Implementation of Peace, Stability and Development of Rakhine State, chaired by the State Counsellor herself, was established on 30 May 2016 to address that state's specific needs. Additionally, in August 2016, she set up an advisory commission, headed by former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to advise the Government on sustainable solutions to the complex situation there.

We have been striving to ensure that Rakhine state is duly developed while ensuring peace, stability and societal cohesion. That is no easy task. The deep mistrust that has developed over decades has to be slowly chiselled away. On 24 August, the Annan Advisory Commission released its final report. Our Government welcomed it immediately.

We had hoped that today would be an opportunity for us to communicate to the world the progress that we have made towards implementing the Advisory Commission's recommendations. It is, therefore, with

deep regret that I must instead primarily address the Assembly on the current state of affairs in Rakhine state following the recent attacks by the terrorist group known as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) last month.

As the General Assembly is aware, within hours of the release of the Advisory Commission's report, a series of coordinated attacks were carried out against 30 police outposts in northern Rakhine. The ARSA claimed responsibility for the attacks. Those attacks ignited fresh violence in the region, resulting in significant loss of life, widespread suffering and the mass displacement of many communities. Many have had to abandon their hearths and homes — not just Muslim and Rakhine, but also other small minority groups, such as Daing-net, Mro, Thet, Mramagyi and Hindus. Most of the world has been oblivious to their existence and plight.

Let me be clear. The Government of Myanmar is extremely concerned about the present situation in Rakhine state. Our deepest sympathy goes to the families of all innocent civilians and members of the police and security forces who have lost their lives. There is no denying that this is a problem of significant magnitude.

I am happy to inform the Assembly that the situation has improved. No armed clashes have been reported since 5 September. Accordingly, we are concerned about reports that the flow of Muslims crossing into Bangladesh remains unabated. We would need to find out the reason for that exodus. What is known is that the great majority of the Muslim population have decided to remain in their villages.

We share the need to ensure that vital humanitarian assistance is provided to all those in need. Moreover, we acknowledge that the duty to respond to the challenges in Rakhine state is first and foremost the duty of our national Government. The situation in Rakhine is complex. The challenges we face are significant. Accordingly, we have adopted an integrated national strategy to address the problem.

I am pleased to announce the launch of a committee chaired by the Union Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission. To ensure transparency and accountability, the committee is mandated to publicly issue a progress report every four months. In addition to the committee, we intend to establish an advisory board made up of eminent persons from both Myanmar and abroad.

At present, humanitarian assistance is our first priority. We are committed to ensuring that aid is received by all those in need, without discrimination. We have already dedicated significant national funds and resources to humanitarian relief operations. I am also pleased to inform the Assembly that a new Government-led mechanism, established in cooperation with the Red Cross Movement, has also started its humanitarian assistance activities.

On behalf of the Government of Myanmar, I would like to express my gratitude to all those countries that have offered to contribute to that assistance programme. In particular, we are grateful for the generous offers of support that we have received recently from many of our friends across the world. At the same time, we are working hard to strengthen relations with Bangladesh. The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and the National Security Advisor visited Bangladesh in January and July. We were hoping for a visit from the Home Affairs Minister of Bangladesh, but it had to be postponed, as the Minister could not come in August. We will welcome him whenever he is able to come and hope to take forward our cooperation on border security matters.

There has been a call for the repatriation of the displaced people who have recently fled from northern Rakhine to Bangladesh. In her statement yesterday, the State Counsellor said that Myanmar was prepared to start the verification process at any time. Our two neighbours had experience with such a process in 1993, through the establishment of a joint working group for implementing the repatriation process, and we can develop a process based on that experience.

Myanmar stands together with the rest of the world in condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Terrorism constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and our position is clear. We cannot condone terrorism. At the same time, the Government is working to ensure that acts of terrorism will not distract us from pursuing the long-term strategy that is necessary in order to address the complex challenges in Rakhine state today. The recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine state provide us with a clear road map. Our implementation committee began its work last week.

and we will be inviting observers to witness some of our programmes in due course.

The recent events in Rakhine state are a painful reminder that we face difficult challenges ahead on the long journey to peace, prosperity and democracy. However, I would like to reiterate that our commitment to peace remains as strong and as unwavering today as it was a year ago, when our State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi, first addressed the General Assembly from this rostrum. As part of that commitment, we have made the national reconciliation and peace process our top priority. Our vision here is clear — we want to achieve a democratic, federal union, based on the principles of freedom, justice, equal rights and self-determination.

With regard to the peace process in Myanmar, I am pleased to inform you that in May we successfully held the second session of our Union Peace Conference. For the first time, we were able to discuss and define key principles that will form the basis of a federal, democratic Union. The Union Accord, consisting of 37 principles covering the political, economic, social and environmental sectors, was signed by representatives of the Government, the Parliament, the military, ethnic armed organizations and political parties.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Although we have made real progress, we know that the road ahead is long and convoluted. Our democratic transition is fragile. At this important juncture in our nation's history, we only ask that the international community continue to support our efforts to achieve peace, prosperity and democracy.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Myanmar's faith and confidence in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. I would also like to emphasize our firm commitment to a world in which peace and harmony prevails.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Henry Van Thio, Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Government and the President of the State of Kuwait, allow me at the outset to extend our sincere congratulations to the President and his friendly country, the Republic of Slovakia, on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I would also like to assure him of my country's support and of our desire to facilitate his work and fulfilment of his responsibilities. We are fully confident that his great experience in international affairs will contribute to the conduct of the session's work.

Furthermore, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for the outstanding work of his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, during his capable and successful presidency of the previous session. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. António Guterres on the deserved trust that the international community has placed in him and his friendly country of Portugal with his appointment as the new Secretary-General. We would like to wish him success in serving the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as in his efforts to strengthen peaceful coexistence among nations, maintain international peace and security and reinforce international cooperation in all fields, including the follow-up to and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets.

In that connection, we would like to say that we value the vital and effective role played by his predecessor, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, over the past 10 years, and the great achievements accomplished during his tenure, such as the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the adoption of the SDGs, among others.

The State of Kuwait firmly believes in the vital and effective role played by the United Nations and its various bodies, agencies and programmes in addressing the increasing global challenges and risks. We welcome the proposals and plans put forward by the Secretary-General to restructure the Secretariat so as to make it more coherent, promote its effectiveness, and ensure the cohesion and coherence of its activities in maintaining international peace and security and the follow-up to and the implementation of the SDGs.

We renew our call with regard to the need to reform the Security Council so as to reflect new international realities in a manner that can reinforce its credibility and legality and ensure a permanent Arab representation on the Council, commensurate with the number of Arab States and their contribution to supporting the various activities of the United Nations.

We are concerned about the challenges and risks that have arisen in various regions of the world, such as the spread of violence, extremism and terrorism, as well as the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the threat of their use. We also deplore violations of human rights such as those of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar. We call for all acts of oppression against them to end immediately. They must be granted the right to citizenship and a decent life.

The State of Kuwait has a firm and principled position when it comes to condemning terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations. We support all international measures to combat terrorism and eliminate terrorist organizations. Kuwait also contributes significantly to the provision of logistical support to the international alliance against extremist groups.

It is regrettable that for multiple reasons the Middle East region has the lion's share of such extremist challenges in various forms. We therefore need concerted international efforts to deal with them, and we must concentrate on addressing their root causes so that the world can enjoy security and stability. Such challenges and risks threaten the very essence of international peace and security, with the majority of victims being innocent civilians.

Our brother Republic of Iraq is facing significant security, political and economic challenges, the most prominent of which is combating terrorist organizations and extremist groups. In that respect, we congratulate the Government and the people of Iraq on the victories that its forces have achieved on the ground in battling the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and on their successful liberation of numerous areas previously under the control of ISIL. We hope that such victories continue until the remaining areas still under ISIL's control are entirely liberated. We hope that they can contribute to national reconciliation efforts among the various elements of the Iraqi people, leading to the restoration of peace and stability in Iraq and the maintenance of its unity, independence and territorial integrity, while creating an appropriate environment for launching the process of reconstruction and ensuring the return of refugees to their homes.

In that context, and in response to the calls for humanitarian and development assistance, the State of Kuwait, in cooperation with Iraq and the international community, will host an international donors conference in the coming year to rebuild the areas devastated by ISIL. We renew our commitment to providing all possible forms of support to help Iraq fulfil its remaining obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions so as to regain its regional and international role and standing.

This year marks 50 years since the occupation of Palestinian territories began in 1967. It is the only Arab cause that has been the subject of endless United Nations resolutions and international and regional initiatives only to see none of them implemented, owing to the intransigence of the occupying Power, Israel, and its explicit and blatant refusal to implement Security Council resolutions of international legitimacy. The most recent is resolution 2334 (2016), which stressed that the Israeli settlement activities are illegal and illegitimate and called for them to cease, as they undermine the prospects of reaching a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

The State of Kuwait stresses its condemnation of the Israeli violations that occurred recently at Al-Haram Al-Sharif in Jerusalem in a new attempt to alter its historical status. We categorically reject all illegal Israeli policies, plans and practices aimed at Judaizing the Holy City, erasing its Arab identity, disrupting its demographic structure and isolating it from its Palestinian perimeter. Such violations represent a flagrant threat to international peace and security and run counter to the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

We therefore appeal to the international community and the Security Council to honour their responsibilities and continue pressuring Israel to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy, allowing the Palestinian people to gain their legitimate political rights and the recognition of their own independent State over their own territory, with East Jerusalem as its capital and based on the borders of 4 June 1967, in accordance with the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative.

It is deplorable that since the onset of the crisis in Syria, we have seen horrifying actions in that ongoing conflict, confirming that destruction is its main theme. Its economic, social and humanitarian impact has yet to be evaluated or calculated, but it will, unfortunately, contribute to the loss of an entire generation of our brothers in Syria. The death toll of the conflict has exceeded 400,000 and nearly 12 million Syrians are either displaced or refugees, in addition to the massive destruction of property and infrastructure that has occurred in the majority of Syria's provinces.

We estimate my country's voluntary contributions at various conferences to be $1.6 billion, the bulk of which has been given to specialized United Nations agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with humanitarian affairs. Despite the political and humanitarian efforts aimed at curbing the conflict in Syria, the reality on the ground remains unchanged, making it clearer than ever that the conviction and position that we have advocated from the beginning — that the crisis cannot be resolved by military means — is correct.

The pace of the political track is still slow. Since the issuance of the communiqué of the Geneva Conference on Syria (A/66/865, annex), whose content has led to sharp differences over its interpretation, we have witnessed seven rounds of Syrian talks in Geneva among the various parties over a period of five years, without any significant progress. We must, therefore, intensify our efforts to bring together the parties to the conflict, so that they can hold direct talks aimed at finding a peaceful settlement in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). Such talks should lead to the creation of a political situation that is able to maintain the unity, independence and sovereignty of Syria and meet the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.

We reaffirm our full commitment to the unity of Yemen and respect for its sovereignty and independence. We reject any interference in its internal affairs and stress our support and backing of constitutional legitimacy in Yemen. A political solution in Yemen should be based on the three agreed actions — in other words, the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcome of the national dialogue and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015). The State of Kuwait has made significant efforts to peacefully resolve the conflict in Yemen. Last year, over a period of three months, we hosted political consultations between the Yemeni parties under the auspices of the United Nations aimed at restoring stability in that brother country. In that regard, we reiterate our readiness to host our Yemeni brethren for the signing of a final accord reached among them.

We renew our support for the efforts of the United Nations and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement to that crisis, thereby ending the suffering of the Yemeni people, who are facing dire humanitarian and economic conditions. We believe that the optimal solution for addressing those humanitarian conditions requires the restoration of peace and stability in Yemen in a manner that would preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

At the regional level and within the framework of the efforts undertaken by Kuwait to consolidate the foundations of good neighbourly relations, we renew our call to the Islamic Republic of Iran to take serious confidence-building measures and establish relations based on reciprocal cooperation, mutual respect, common interests and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. We also call on it to renounce practices that jeopardize the security and stability of the region and contradict the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, and to adhere to the resolutions of international legitimacy. Such measures would enable us to direct our efforts towards reconstruction and development, so that all the peoples of the region can enjoy security, peace and well-being.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development faces major challenges, thanks to erroneous behaviour on the part of human beings over the years and the impact of natural disasters and greenhouse-gas emissions — challenges that only increase our international responsibility. It is therefore incumbent

on us to do our utmost to fully implement the 2030 Agenda. To that end, we must enhance the mechanisms of development partnerships in order to keep pace with the needs and requirements of sustainable development. By doing that, we will be able to fulfil our international commitments and show our solidarity at the global level. That would constitute a real start towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a view to eliminating every form of poverty. In the context of the historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change, we must address the impact of climate change, as it represents one of the biggest impediments to achieving the SDGs, and we must do so by following the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility.

The State of Kuwait is steadily forging ahead under the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, as we work to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by mainstreaming its goals in Kuwaiti national development plans and programmes, with the participation of all sectors of civil society and all partners. My country's development plan, the New Kuwait 2035 strategy, contains seven basic pillars that aim to transform Kuwait into a leading regional financial, commercial, cultural and institutional hub.

The State of Kuwait has consistently shouldered its regional and international responsibilities with a view to achieving development in its various economic, social and environmental dimensions. We have come a long way along the path of implementing the noble initiatives of His Highness the Amir aimed at advancing international partnerships and reinforcing Kuwait's previous humanitarian and development efforts.

Before I conclude my statement, I would like to express the gratitude of the Government and the people of the State of Kuwait for the trust that those present placed in my country during the elections held in June by electing it as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period 2018-2019. Almost 40 years after Kuwait's first non-permanent membership in the Security Council from 1978 to 1979, we return today to renew our commitment to strengthening the role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, the prevention of conflicts and the support of mediation efforts and endeavours for the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

We are also committed to supporting efforts to make the Council more transparent and promote the participation of small States in the work of the United Nations and its bodies. We will strive to support and activate the international response to the refugee and immigrant crises and all other humanitarian crises resulting from wars and conflicts, which have intensified in recent years, while hoping that peace and security prevail all over the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait for the statement he has just made.

His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji.

Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Bainimarama (Fiji): I want to begin by congratulating Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and by wishing him every success in the upcoming year.

As we all know, the global community faces a great number of challenges, of which climate change is only one. But I am sure that we all want to send a message of solidarity and sympathy tonight to the millions of people in the Caribbean who are suffering from the ravages of Hurricane Maria. It is an especially cruel ordeal so soon after Hurricane Irma paved a path of destruction through the Caribbean and the southern part of the United States. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have been affected.

The Fijian people share a special sense of solidarity with those who have lost either loved ones or their

homes and possessions in such events. Last year, we lost 44 of our own people and a third of our gross domestic product when Fiji was struck by the biggest cyclone in its history. So, as the incoming President of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-23), I am deeply conscious of the need to lead a global response to the underlying causes of such events. The appalling suffering in the Caribbean and the United States reminds us all that there is no time to waste.

I would also like to pay tribute to the new President's predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, the first Fijian to occupy the presidency of the General Assembly. Ambassador Thomson carried out his role with great distinction, and I especially want to thank him for the role he has played in bringing the parlous state of our oceans to global attention. The Ocean Conference that Fiji co-hosted with Sweden in June was an unqualified success. As a global community, we have begun the massive task of restoring the health of our oceans and tackling the overfishing that is stripping them of marine life and depriving millions of people of a precious resource, now and in the future. I salute the United Nations for appointing Ambassador Thomson as Special Envoy for the Ocean. It is an honour for Fiji to have one of our own leading an effort that is so vital to ensuring the implementation of a crucial Sustainable Development Goal.

Next year will mark the fortieth anniversary of Fiji's contribution to United Nations peacekeeping. As a small nation, we have suffered a great deal of pain from the loss of some of our finest troops on peacekeeping duties over the years. But our contribution is a very important part of how we see ourselves as a nation, with our men and women in uniform serving the global community by protecting ordinary people in troubled parts of the world. For 40 years, we have helped make the world more secure. And now we are determined to make a successful contribution to the wider security of the planet through our leadership of COP-23.

There is no escaping the fact that climate change is as great a threat to global security as any conflict. Millions of people are already on the move because of drought and the changes to agriculture that threaten their food security. History has taught us that human beings will always fight over access to water. Unless we tackle the underlying causes of climate change, we already know that some places will become unlivable and others will disappear altogether. In my own region, three of our neighbours are at risk, which is why Fiji has offered to give refuge to the people of Kiribati and Tuvalu in the event of a worst-case scenario in which their homes sink beneath the waves.

For the Fijian people, climate change is real. It affects our lives in every way. The entire villages that we are moving out of the way of rising seas, the loss of our ancestral burial grounds, the salinity affecting our crops and the constant threat of destruction to homes and infrastructure of the kind that we experienced last year are all evidence of that. The reason that our hearts go out to the people of the Caribbean right now is not only because we can empathize with them but because we fear the same fate. I implore the nations of the world to imagine a third of their gross domestic product being destroyed in the space of a year or so. Imagine another cyclone scoring a direct hit and wiping out decades of development.

It is clear that global warming changes our very understanding of what our national interests are. It challenges us to understand that the only way for every nation to put itself first is to lock arms with every other nation and move forward together. Anything else is self-destructive for the world and for each nation. It may be tempting for political leaders to show that they are protecting some national industry or near-term economic goal, but we must ask at what cost. Wise leaders must work hard to convince their peoples to embrace the path that we know that we must take. There is no choice to be made between prosperity and a healthy climate, for how prosperous can we be if we must devote our resources to relocating entire populations or reinforcing major cities? How much does it cost to find new places to farm? What will the consequences be for global and regional security if nations begin to compete for safe land or have conflicts over the movements of climate refugees? It is obvious that we need to cooperate.

We need to learn from each other and use the world's considerable resources to do the greatest possible amount of good for the greatest possible number of people. We need to continue to create prosperity and ensure the well-being of the nations and ecosystems of the world. If we view the process as some sort of negotiation in which each country tries to preserve its narrow national interests, we will all lose. We will be powerless to protect our own people from the consequences of climate change. Collective action

is the only way forward. Wise men and women will understand that.

That is why I took on the role of President of COP-23 and why I have eagerly embraced the opportunity to be the first Pacific Islander to do so. It is about ensuring that my own people flourish and prosper, now and in the future. By collaborating with the other nations of the world through the process, we will ensure that together, humankind can flourish and prosper. Morocco will pass the ball to me and the Fijian team in Bonn in November, and we thank the Moroccan presidency of COP-22 for making such great strides towards the goal of fully implementing the Paris Climate Change Agreement. Next year, Fiji will pass the ball to Poland. I want to assure the Polish presidency of COP-24 that Fiji will be supporting it throughout the entire process.

Our own presidency would not be possible without Germany's wonderful assistance. We simply could not have staged an event of such size and complexity in Fiji. Out of necessity, we have forged a bond with Germany that is an example to the world of how countries at opposite ends of the Earth and of vastly different means and size can work effectively for a common goal. We did it with Sweden at the Ocean Conference in June, and we are equally proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with Germany to deliver on the goals that the Paris Agreement has outlined.

Fiji is deeply conscious that Governments alone cannot overcome the challenge at hand. That is why we are placing such emphasis on the notion of a grand coalition of Governments at every level with civil society, the private sector and ordinary citizens moving the agenda forward. I am reaching out to governors, mayors and leaders of every sort across our societies, people of faith, people on the front line in the climate struggle, women and the young people who represent our future. We are going to do things differently in Bonn. The formal proceedings will be led by our chief negotiator, Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan, and I will play a roving role. I will be on hand to resolve any difficulties that arise in the formal negotiations. In order to reflect the importance of our grand coalition, I will be travelling between the two zones in Bonn, that of the formal negotiations and the climate action zone, along with my good friend and our climate champion, Mr. Inia Seruiratu, as well as my fellow Pacific leaders. I am counting on them to help me get the message across that only by working together can we move the process faster and further.

In the climate action zone — the Bonn zone — Fiji and Germany are bringing together all those who have a part to play in making our grand coalition a great transformation, including climate activists, companies at the cutting edge of technology, artists, creative people, dancers and performers. We will be stamping the zone with the Fijian *bula* spirit of optimism and inclusiveness that has made our islands famous throughout the world. In the formal Bula zone, we want the nations of the world to embrace what we in Fiji and some other Pacific countries call the spirit of *talanoa*, characterized by dialogue based on trust, empathy and the collective good. In our experience, it is the best way of getting things done, especially in difficult circumstances. It embodies engagement that is respectful, honest and cooperative and acknowledges that none of us, no matter how powerful, can solve the climate challenge on our own. For humankind to survive, flourish and prosper, we have no alternative but to cooperate.

We have already established a solid foundation for our efforts in the presidency. The formal negotiations are progressing, and we are looking forward to welcoming ministers and their delegations and representatives of civil society to Fiji next month for our pre-COP meeting. We are already delighted to see the energy and sense of purpose of the leaders in our grand coalition. I am especially grateful to Governor Jerry Brown of California, whom I have appointed to help me as Special Envoy for States and Regions and who heads an impressive list of political leaders around the world who are part of the Under2 Coalition. As we all know, the Paris Agreement calls for global warming to be kept well under 2°C above the average temperature of the industrial age and as close as possible to 1.5°C.

A year ago I stood here, before my appointment as President of COP-23, and called for 1.5°C to be our target (see A/71/PV.8). I meant it then and I mean it now. Fixing that number as our objective is urgent, and we must do it as soon as possible. I certainly carry with me the authority of the Pacific to pursue that objective, and at this point I would like to pay heartfelt tribute to a Pacific islander whom we have just lost but whose legacy will live on in these negotiations. Two years ago, Tony deBrum of the Marshall Islands took a very powerful slogan to Paris — "One point five to stay alive". We intend to honour Tony's legacy, and I intend to draw on his spirit during my presidency.

In addition to ensuring decisive action to limit global warming, we must also do a lot more to make nations and communities more resilient where the effects of climate change are concerned. We know that we are all going to have to adapt. But we must make special provision for those who are most vulnerable and have the fewest resources for coping with the catastrophic consequences we are witnessing all around us. We are pleased to be part of a serious engagement with Governments and the private sector aimed at securing innovative and more affordable access to insurance so that those affected by disasters can recover more quickly. It is a question of fairness and economic development, because without insurance, many nations and communities find restoration and rebuilding simply too great a burden. We are also encouraged by the rapid development of clean, affordable alternative-energy solutions for countries across the world, which offers great promise that we can achieve the 1.5°C target and prosper.

I have no doubt that the role that I have embraced as COP-23 President is the most important ever undertaken by a Fijian leader. I appeal to my fellow Pacific leaders to support me as we tackle the greatest challenge that our region and the world have ever seen. I want to acknowledge the work of the past 30 years of the Alliance of Small Island States, which has consistently looked after the interests of our peoples and reminded the world that our interests are the interests of every global citizen. We are all in the same canoe, which is why we will have a Fijian ocean-going canoe — a *na drua* — in the main hall in Bonn to remind everyone of the need to fill its sails with the collective determination to move this process forward and deliver on the promise we made to each other in Paris. To all the nations that have yet to ratify the Paris Agreement, I say, please do so.

I appeal to the nations of the world and to all the leaders of the grand coalition for their support. I draw my power as COP President from them and I will do everything in my power to use it wisely.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nasser Bourita, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Mr. Bourita (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco, I would like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to wish him every success in his noble task. We would also like to commend his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his excellent work and the successes that his presidency brought.

We would like to reiterate our support for the efforts of Secretary-General Guterres to reform the United Nations and its mechanisms on the political, economic and security fronts. The proposed reforms create new dynamics, giving new momentum to the Organization's activities and strengthening the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We would also like to express the support of the Kingdom of Morocco for the road map that the Secretary-General has proposed for mediation and preventive diplomacy in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, building on efforts to maintain peace, realize sustainable development and combat terrorism. Our world today is at a crossroads that is having a direct effect on our collective efforts to achieve sustainable development, strengthen peace and security and lay the foundations of cooperation, and I would therefore like to address three relevant issues.

First, there can be no doubt that while walls between nations have come down and the numbers of victims have diminished, there have emerged new threats to security, such as terrorism, extremism, separatist movements and climate change, that are no less dangerous than previous ones. It is clear that while globalization has greatly boosted the international economy, it also triggered the economic and financial crisis that led to increased unemployment and poverty and deepened social differences within States.

Secondly, while information technology has witnessed great developments, including expanded networks and growing numbers of users, some terrorist organizations have sought to use those developments to undermine security and stability, threaten the peace of individuals and erode development efforts, while still others have used them to advance their criminal enterprises. This situation, which gives a glimpse of the future of our world, is very threatening because we are

unable to foresee what is coming. We therefore have to reform our collective working mechanisms in order to improve their predictive capacities.

Thirdly, there are those who believe that they have the ability and resources to fend for themselves against these difficulties. However, the Kingdom of Morocco believes that only an effective, multilateral global organization can resolve the collective problems that we are all facing.

We can no longer look at Africa as a burden on the international community. We Africans do not believe that our continent has ever been a burden on the world, despite the misunderstandings and unfair rulings and judgements that exist. Africa has yet to take its proper place on the world's agenda, which cannot be based on the numbers of conferences dedicated to it, related agenda items taken up or resolutions adopted. The continent's problems cannot be addressed through the mere provision of assistance. Given its varied natural and human resources — including approximately a billion young people — its fertile lands and abundant water, Africa has enormous potential.

Thanks to the foresight of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, over the past two decades Morocco has made South-South cooperation the basis of its foreign policy, reflecting the King's view that such cooperation represents a promising foundation for the efforts of the international community. Morocco has adopted a realistic approach to forging partnerships and is supplying human resources and technological know-how to assist African countries in their efforts. In an address to the people of Morocco on 20 August 2016, His Majesty emphasized that Morocco does not view Africa as a market for the sale and promotion of Moroccan products or as a source of quick profits, but as a forum for joint action to save the region and develop African cities. That is why we have sought to establish partnerships with a number of African countries aimed at supporting economic growth and integration and providing jobs and security. That was not a decision fuelled by opportunism but a historic commitment emerging from the King's deep understanding of the continent, as he expressed at the twenty-eighth session of the Summit of the African Union when he said, "Africa is my continent. Africa is my home".

With the same commitment and determination, Morocco will continue to shoulder its responsibility within the African Union as a founding member of its precursor, the Organization of African Unity, and as a committed partner that has never disappointed the African continent but rather has always defended it in regional and international forums. We are always eager to serve Africa and realize its ambitions and objectives. Morocco is committed to multilateralism and to finding the right answers to problems, based on the international community's three important areas of responsibility — migration, climate change and the fight against terrorism and extremism — and attested to by the confidence that the international community has placed in Morocco, which bases its approach on aligning its national priorities with those on the United Nations agenda and on sharing its experience with African partners.

As Chair of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, Morocco, along with the Netherlands, works to strengthen national and regional cooperation and to share its experience in combating terrorism with its African brothers and partners by sharing information and expertise, as well as through religious training programmes that reject all forms of intolerance and extremism and that have reached hundreds of thousands of imams and leaders, men and women, of various African nationalities, at centres such as the Institute of Mohammed V and the Mohammed VI Foundation for African Ulema.

Morocco co-chairs the Global Forum on Migration and Development, which seeks to develop proposals that are not limited to security issues but are also informed by the development and human aspects of migration. We hope those efforts will be included in the global compact on migration to be adopted by the United Nations in 2018. Within the African Union, King Mohammed will be presenting a concept paper on developing a joint African approach to migration and its root causes. Morocco has also developed a strategy for activating a process that can help African citizens south of the Sahara fully enjoy their economic and social rights.

With regard to climate change, Morocco presided over the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Marrakech in November 2016. Qualitative changes were made during the session in translating the Paris Agreement on Climate Change into practical measures, as well as the adoption of the Marrakech Declaration, which states that efforts to achieve development and sustainable development

represent a high-level political commitment that should be honoured with a balanced and cooperative approach that meets the needs of least developed countries and developing nations.

Africa is at the heart of Morocco's interests in this regard. His Majesty chaired the first African summit on climate change, which resulted in an ambitious and balanced action plan that reflects the continent's commitment to shouldering its responsibilities with regard to international efforts. At the national level, Morocco has adopted an ambitious policy for addressing the effects of climate change, particularly where renewable energy is concerned. It should reduce our energy needs by 42 per cent by 2020 and 52 per cent by 2030, as well as lowering our carbon dependency. It should also attract promising international investment in the development of clean energy.

Since the 1960s, the Kingdom of Morocco has been committed to the United Nations cause in deploying peacekeeping forces in Africa. We have contributed to those international forces by sending military units totalling 6,000 soldiers to six countries — Angola, the Congo, Somalia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, where there are currently more than 1,600 Moroccan military personnel. I would like to express Morocco's deep concern about the irresponsible attacks that have recently been made on international peacekeepers. Such attacks trample on United Nations values and should be considered war crimes whose perpetrators should be brought to justice. The Kingdom of Morocco shares the Organization's concern about such attacks and therefore requests that the Secretariat take appropriate measures to protect peacekeepers in conflict zones. Today, we need a new approach to peacekeeping operations, making troop-contributing countries central to their decision-making in a way that is based on the values of the United Nations.

The Palestinian question was one of the first just causes taken up by the United Nations following its inception, yet no solution has been found to date, nor is any agreement in sight, despite the tremendous efforts made by the international community, especially the current United States Administration. The Kingdom of Morocco, whose King Mohammed VI chairs the Al-Quds Al-Sharif Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, reiterates its rejection of any attempts aimed at changing the historical and legal status of the Holy City and the Al-Aqsa Mosque and renews its calls to the Israeli authorities to cease such practices.

The Arab Maghreb is still dealing with the difficult issues that have resulted from the lack of political cooperation and the vulnerable security situation produced by the crisis in Libya. This raises questions for the parties that are still dealing with past conflicts, such as in the Moroccan Sahara. If the international community wishes to achieve a peaceful settlement based on consensus, and if the Moroccan initiative for self-rule there is to gain more support, the parties in the region involved in that dispute should abandon their two-faced discourse and assume their responsibilities. Morocco would like to emphasize its readiness to work in honestly and transparently with the Secretary-General and Mr. Horst Köhler, his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, in order to reach a peaceful settlement that can maintain Morocco's territorial integrity and sovereignty, based on the self-rule initiative.

Morocco is also developing a policy to enable the people of the Moroccan Sahara to rule themselves and thus to enable North-West Africa to mitigate the dangers of separatism, Balkanization, extremism and terrorism. In that context, we would like to call the Assembly's attention to the terrible situation in the Tindouf refugee camps and urge the international community to put pressure on the host country to allow the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to respond to the Secretary-General's call and register everyone in the camps.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Miguel Vargas Maldonado, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Vargas Maldonado (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am honoured to address the General Assembly on behalf of the people and the Government of the Dominican Republic. At the outset, I would like to apologize on behalf of Mr. Danilo Madina Sánchez, President of the Dominican Republic, for his absence from the debate, as he has had to return to our country to deal with Hurricane Maria.

Our meeting this week coincides with the devastating season of natural disasters that our region has been enduring for nearly a month with terrible consequences. The disasters have also spread to Mexico, which has been hit by two destructive earthquakes, and the southern United States, viciously punished by Hurricane Harvey. In the catalogue of human suffering

caused by Hurricane Irma, that of Antigua and Barbuda stands out, particularly Barbuda, 90 per cent of whose infrastructure has collapsed, according to its Prime Minister, Gaston Browne. Hardly had Irma's devastating winds dropped than Maria arrived, leaving a new trail of destruction and death, inflicting a direct hit first on Dominica and today on its neighbour Puerto Rico, causing great destruction and damage.

We take this opportunity to express our solidarity with Puerto Rico, which is also our neighbour, as well as with all the countries affected. The people of the Dominican Republic offer their deepest sympathy for the destruction and the large numbers of victims. Accurate figures for the damage done on Saint Barthélemy, Saint Maarten, Anguilla, the Virgin Islands, Tortola, Turks and Caicos, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and especially Florida and Cuba, have yet to be determined. However, we can say that they have suffered substantial damage, that recovery will take years and that, tragically, valuable lives have been lost.

To give Member States an idea of how severely we have been affected, despite the lack of definitive figures, I can say that the material losses caused by this hurricane season alone far exceed the gross domestic product of the Dominican Republic. We often focus on material damage and ignore the human suffering caused by such disasters, whose lethal power has been aggravated by climate change. The statistics are striking, but they cannot reflect the pain of the victims, their desolation at seeing so much work ruined and so many efforts, visions and dreams lost. It is not just houses that have been lost, it is homes. Material damage has been done, but above all, lives have been shattered.

We must recognize the inherent dangers of climate change, which are far more significant in the context of the geography of the Caribbean. Our economies, our way of life and our potential for development are in jeopardy. The vulnerability of the Caribbean and of the Dominican Republic poses a risk that we cannot face alone. While our country was fortunate enough not to suffer human losses during the recent passage of Hurricane Irma, we are aware that, like every Caribbean island, we will always be vulnerable to this type of phenomenon.

That reality impels us to once again draw the Assembly's attention to the crucial importance of joining forces to confront such threats. It compels us to act in a responsible and united way to defend the lives of our people. And I would like to be extremely clear on this point. The messages of solidarity and the humanitarian aid that always follow such disasters are not enough. Nor is it enough to sign agreements on climate change. There is an urgent and critical need to act coherently on those agreements in order to advance a united agenda and set concrete plans in motion.

We are facing a growing problem that knows no borders and requires the cooperation and solidarity of all of us, but especially the most developed and most powerful countries. We are facing a reality that will oblige us to act as responsibly as we can if we do not want to go on lamenting the consequences. That is why my country is once again proposing to the Assembly that we create a special fund for dealing with this type of disaster and for prevention and early warning, which will help us save lives. If we want to see an example of how economic resources can help to mitigate the damage done by natural phenomena, we need only look at the United States. After the most recent hurricanes, its Government, which has the necessary resources, immediately made $15 billion available for rebuilding its affected states, thereby providing its citizens with the help they needed. Conversely, there is no way that vulnerable areas such as the island region of the Caribbean can cope with the devastation that such phenomena inflict on our peoples and countries.

As an example, take my own country, the Dominican Republic. This year, natural phenomena in the form of rains and floods have damaged thousands of kilometres of highways and roads, resulting in substantial losses. Dozens of bridges have collapsed and miles of retaining walls and irrigation canals have been destroyed. Thousands of acres of mixed farmland that are vital to keeping our people fed every day have been lost. In addition, among much other damage, hundreds of homes have been destroyed, not counting those hit by Hurricane Irma. We have spent more than $500 million on rescue and relief operations just in the past few months.

We are therefore concerned about the fact that similar, or even more powerful, events resulting from climate change have the potential to set the development of ours and other Caribbean countries back 10 years. I am talking about snatching away a whole people's happiness and prospects for the future. That is not something we can continue to take lightly. It is in that

context that the work of the United Nations and the solidarity between our countries make most sense.

On behalf of all the men, women, children and elderly people who are utterly desperate right now, I urge all of us to seek ways for the United Nations to support Governments that cannot cope on their own in rebuilding their countries in the wake of natural disasters. Let us take the necessary steps to make that aid available and ensure that it reaches those in desperate need. It is part of our responsibility as brother nations. I would also like to call on the countries of the United Nations to reflect anew, and urgently, on what we must do in order to counteract extreme climate events. The scientific evidence for the relationship between natural disasters, man-made change and global warming is quite sufficient. It is time for us to play our part and act to slow down events, or the future will judge us for our total lack of responsibility.

Since the Organization was founded, 72 years ago, our country has been a member of the unique experience in the history of humankind that is its creation. Since then, the United Nations has been a beacon pointing the way to a future of hope. We must never fall into complacency on that road. We know that essential aspects of our civilization, such as peace, security and development, are not gifts that drop from the sky. They are not something that we can take for granted. They are the result of a commitment between our peoples that must be constantly renewed and that we must keep working for. The Dominican Republic is fully committed to that vision and to the search for comprehensive solutions to the challenges facing the international community. We are determined to contribute energetically to building an ever-more democratic, participatory and effective United Nations to help solve our peoples' real problems.

The meeting rose at 9.35 p.m.